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THE NEW YORKER

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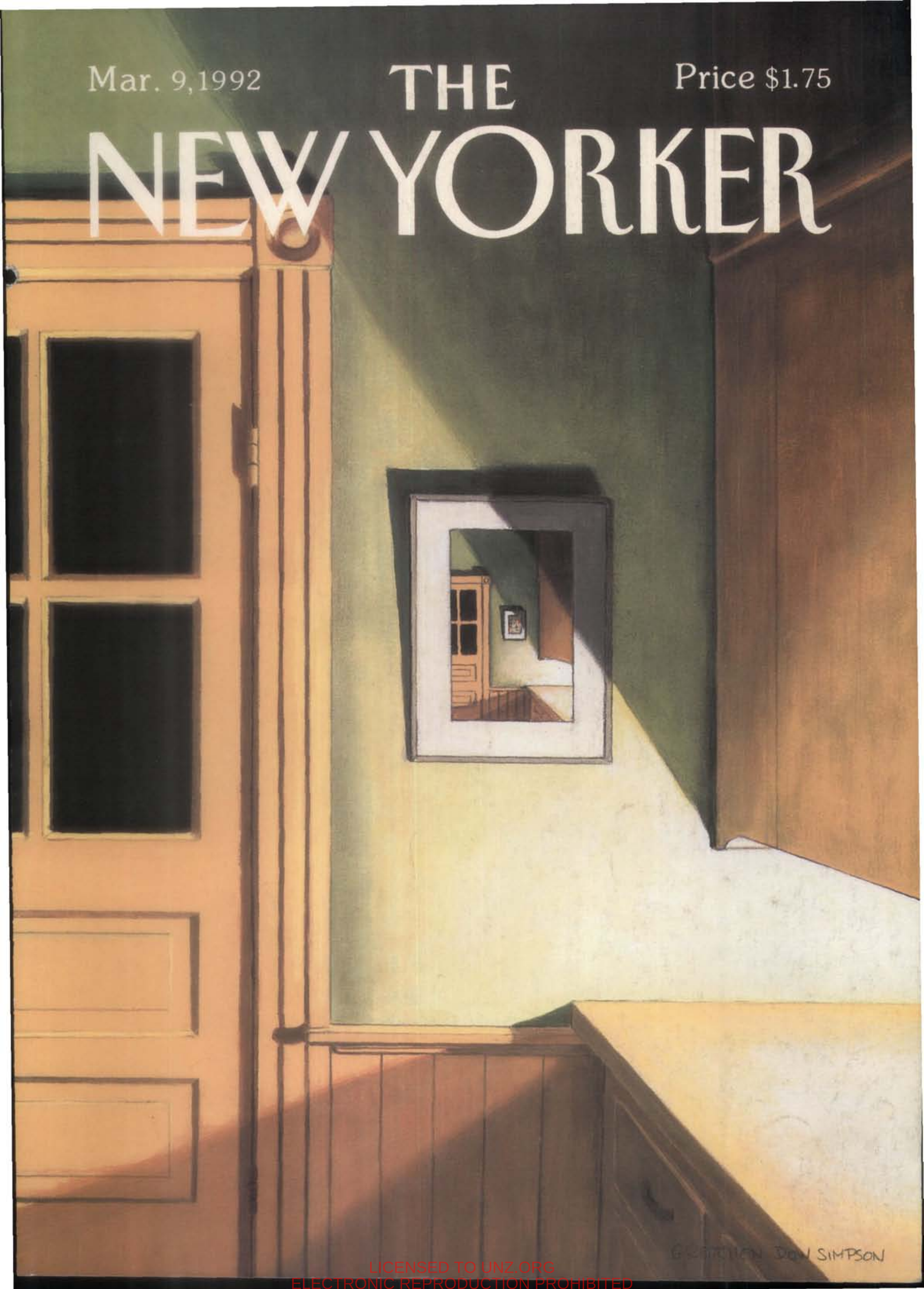
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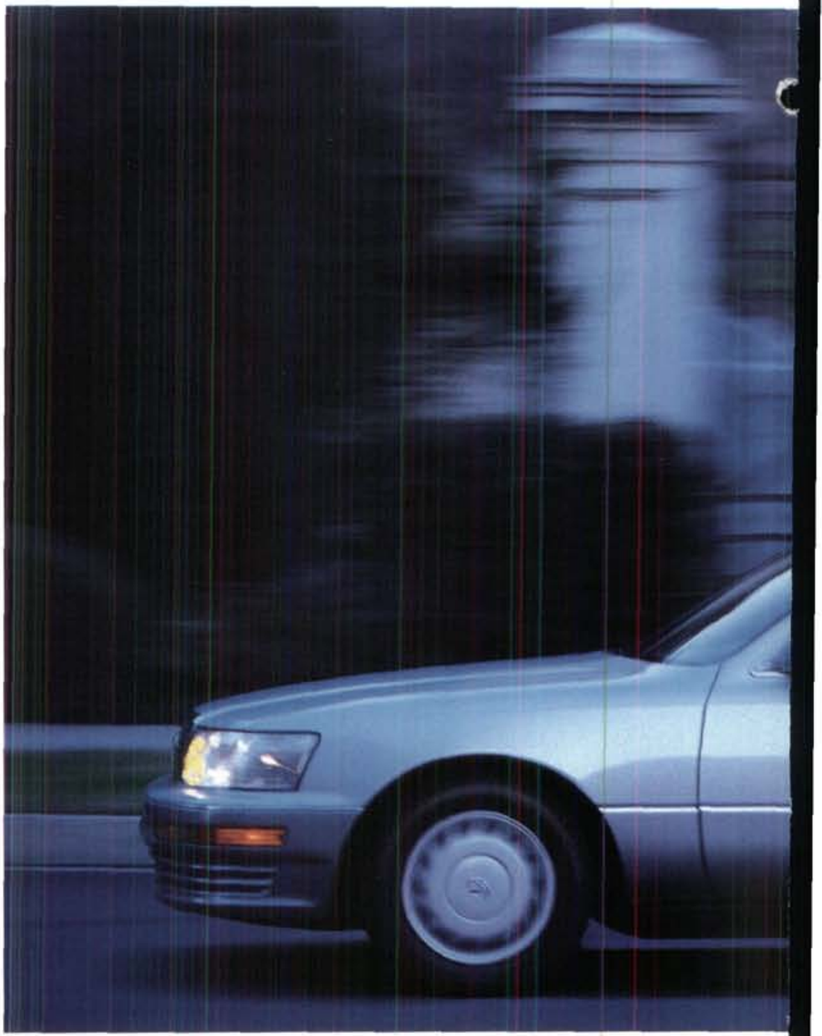

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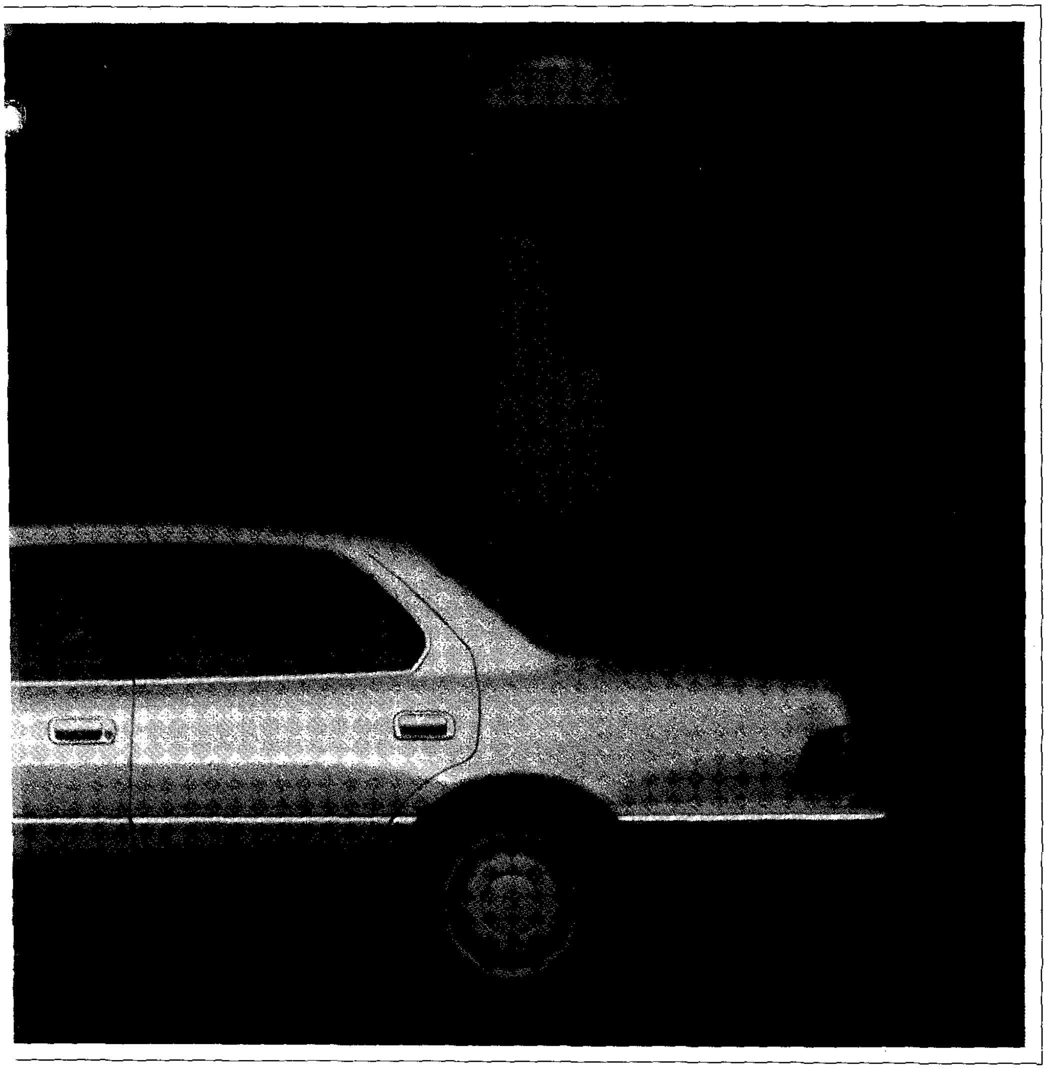

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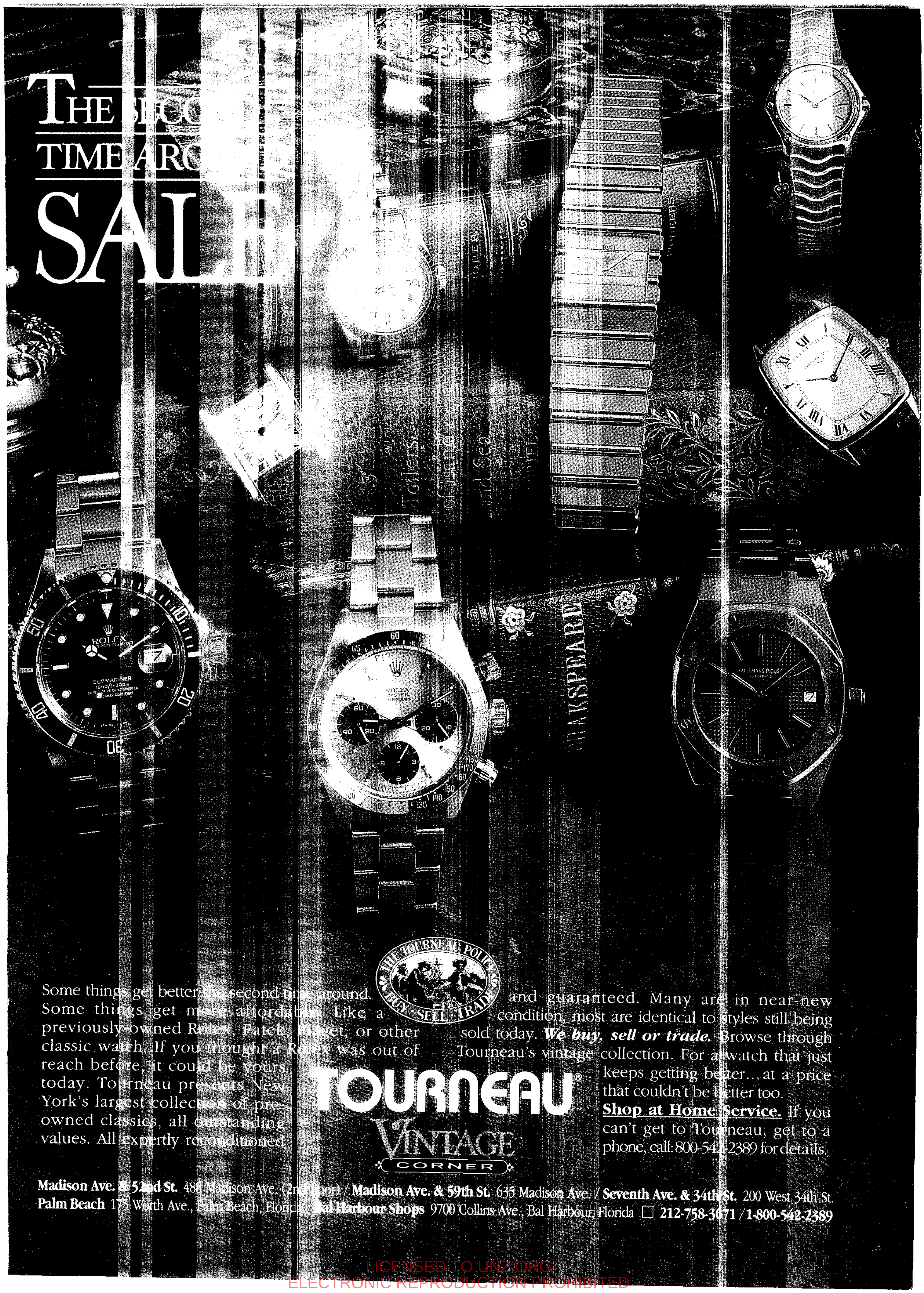

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GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN

THE THEATRE

OVER the past five years, John Kelly has shaped his performance pieces around a variety of subjects, but almost all of them—Orpheus, Egon Schiele, Joni Mitchell—may be said to share at least one thing: they peaked young. Perhaps fearing that such morbid choices have cast him as an incurable romantic, Kelly has created a slightly less melancholy mood for his new work. In "Akin" (La Mama; through March 8), he drapes his tall, lithe figure in troubadour's garb and bathes his piercing countertenor voice in medieval melodies. And he uses parables (the Prodigal Son) and themes (the transformative power of gifts) that are even older than the Middle Ages. He hasn't quite expunged his romantic side, however. Early stirrings of genius still preoccupy him, as do premature deaths. "We're too young to be so old," Kelly muses in a tender love song with overt reference to our own age, the age of AIDS. At the end of his hour-long piece, which incorporates film, dance, and nine musicians and stage performers (all good), Kelly's AIDS motif has become an angry litany. "Eleven years and counting," he intones to tumbrel-rhythmed accompaniment. For a better sense of all this, imagine a tremulous, tonsured Larry Kramer. Or, more to the point, since the music here is by Richard Peaslee, imagine "Marat, we're poor" with timely lyrics.

"Akin" was co-produced by Music-Theatre Group, and it is not without some of the pretentiousness, the aimless fervor, that often besets that organization's productions ("Miracolo d'Amore," "The Hunger Artist"). But for the most part Kelly shies away from self-indulgence. Just when you think a stage picture has been held too long, he gracefully shifts the tableau. He seems to know that, in a season when the theatre is brimming with AIDS-related work, he must, as he says, keep his "grief brief."

OPENINGS AND PREVIEWS

(Please call the phone number listed with the theatre for schedule and ticket information.)

And—Ron Silver stars in a play by Roger Rosenblatt. Directed by Wynn Handman. Previews March 4-7. Opens March 8 at 3. (American Place, 111 W. 46th St. 840-3074.)

Griffin Dunne in "Search and Destroy"

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Before It Hits Home—A play by Cheryl L. West about a young black man with AIDS and his family. With Frankie R. Faison, Yvette Hawkins, and James McDaniel. Previews through March 8. Opens March 10 at 8, and runs through March 22. (Public, 425 Lafayette St. 598-7150.)

Bernie's Bar Mitzvah—Written and directed by Howard Perloff, this you-are-part-of-the-show show includes an array of food (complete with a Viennese table) in the ticket price. Ian Bonds plays Bernie. In previews. (24-Karat Club, 327 W. 44th St. 1-800 231-8607.)

Chain and **Late Bus to Mecca**—A double bill of plays by Pearl Cleage. Preview on March 2. Opens March 3 at 8. (Judith Anderson, 422 W. 42nd St. 873-3767.)

Conversations with My Father—Judd Hirsch, Richard Libertini, and Tony Shalhoub in a new play by Herb Gardner. Daniel Sullivan directed. In previews. (Royale, 242 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

Death and the Maiden—A drama by the Chilean playwright Ariel Dorfman, which stars Glenn Close, Richard Dreyfuss, and Gene Hackman. Mike Nichols directed. In previews. (Brooks Atkinson, 256 W. 47th St. 719-4099.)

First Is Supper—The American Jewish Theatre presents a play by the comedian Shelley Berman. In previews. (Susan Bloch, 307 W. 26th St. 633-9797.)

Four Baboons Adoring the Sun—Stockard Channing and James Naughton lead the cast of a new play by John Guare. Directed by Peter Hall. In previews. (Vivian Beaumont, Lincoln Center. 239-6200.)

Get Used to It—A new gay musical by Tom Wilson Weinberg. In previews. (Courtyard Playhouse, 39 Grove St. 869-3530.)

Hamlet—Stephen Lang has the title role and Elizabeth McGovern is Ophelia in this Roundabout Theatre Company production. Paul Weidner directed. Previews begin March 11. (Criterion Center, Broadway at 45th St. 869-8400.)

Homo Sapien Shuffle—A play written and directed by Richard Caliban. Previews through March 8. Opens March 9 at 8, and runs through March 29. (Public, 425 Lafayette St. 598-7150.)

Lotto (Experience the Dream)—Cliff Roquemore's comedy about a family who wins the lottery. The show played Brooklyn's Billie Holiday Theatre until recently and has now moved to Manhattan. Previews begin March 4. (Heckscher, Fifth Ave. at 104th St. 369-6500.)

Manhattan Class Company—Presenting a festival of one-act play by Jacquelyn Reingold, Ethan Silverman, Oni Faida Lampley, and Patrick Breen. Previews March 4-8. Opens March 9 at 7, and runs through March 21. (120 W. 28th St. 727-7722.)

Opal—A new musical by Robert Nassif Lindsey, presented by the Lamb's Theatre Company. Previews begin March 4. (Lamb's, 130 W. 44th St. 997-1780.)

The Other Side of Paradise—Keir Dullea plays F. Scott Fitzgerald in this one-man show written by John Kane. Previews March 3-4. Opens March 5 at 7:30. (Kaufman, 534 W. 42nd St. 563-1684.)

Peacetime—Stephen Mailer is a young Jewish veteran of the First World War in this play by Elaine Berman. Pamela Berlin directed. Previews March 3-7. Opens March 8 at 7:30. (WPA Theatre, 519 W. 23rd St. 206-0523.)

OPENED RECENTLY

Akin—A music-dance-theatre work conceived and directed by, and starring, John Kelly. With a score by Richard Peaslee and lyrics by Mark Campbell. (La Mama Annex, 66 E. 4th St. 475-7710. Closes March 8.)

Ascension Day—The Working Theatre presents a play by Michael Henry Brown about the 1831 slave rebellion led by Nat Turner. Directed by L. Kenneth Richardson. (Hudson Guild Theatre, 441 W. 26th St. 279-4200. Closes March 8.)

Beau Jest—A comedy by James Sherman. (Lamb's, 130 W. 44th St. 997-1780.)

The Bells; or, the Polish Jew—Everett Quinton has adapted an adaptation of a hundred-and-twenty-year-old "dramatic study." He also plays all the roles. Eureka directed. (Charles Ludlam, 1 Sheridan Sq. 691-2271.)

Boesman & Lena—This revival of Athol Fugard's spellbinding play is more openly emotional than most other stagings have been. Keith David and Lynne Thigpen are the intrepid Cape Coloureds and Tsepo Mokone is the black African, whom the couple shelter at considerable risk. All three perform splendidly, under Mr. Fugard's direction. (Reviewed in our issue of 2/10/92.) (Manhattan Theatre Club, at City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 581-7907. Closes March 22.)

Catskills on Broadway—A festival of ethnicity and all but unbroken laughter. Freddie Roman and Mal Z. Lawrence are the Jewish comedians; Dick Capri handles the Italians. The jokes explode around us, and there isn't a dud in the lot. Marilyn Michaels, the fourth member of the company, does imitations of imitations. (12/23/91) (Lunt-Fontanne, 205 W. 46th St. 307-4100.)

Chess—Tim Rice has revised the book and lyrics for this revival of the musical, which has a score by Benny Andersson and Björn Ulvaeus. (Master, Riverside Dr. at 103rd St. 663-8893.)

Circle Repertory Company—The third play of the season is **the baltimore waltz**, by Paula Vogel. The cast, directed by Anne Bogart, consists of Cherry Jones, Joe Mantello, and Richard Thompson. (99 Seventh Ave. S. 924-7100. Closes March 15.)

The Comedy of Errors—A production of Shakespeare's comedy, directed by William Gaskill and presented by Theatre for a New Audience. (St. Clement's, 423 W. 46th St. 279-4200. Closes March 14.)

Crazy for You—Lightly based on "Girl Crazy," which opened in 1930, this glorious show is actually a celebration of the music of George Gershwin and the lyrics of his brother Ira—nineteen songs in all—and also of the witty, imaginative choreography of Susan Stroman. Ken Ludwig wrote the lively book. Harry Groener and Jodi Benson are the lead actor/dancers. The scenery is by Robin Wagner; the costumes are by William Ivey Long; and the masterly direction is by Mike Ockrent. Bless 'em all. (3/2/92) (Shubert, 225 W. 44th St. 239-6200.)

Creditors—Zach Grenier, Caroline Lagerfelt, and Victor Slezak in August Strindberg's 1889 play. (CSC, 136 E. 13th St. 677-4210. Closes March 8.)

Dancing at Lughnasa—How you respond to Brian Friel's wistful autobiographical play depends a good deal on your personality and preoccupations. Either you will find it lovely and lyrical or it will strike you as the memory play from Hell. (11/4/91) (Plymouth, 236 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

Down the Flats—A play by Tony Kavanagh, which is set in Dublin. (Irish Arts Center, 553 W. 51st St. 757-3318.)

Finkel's Follies—A show billed as "a new American musical vaudeville," conceived by and starring Fyvush Finkel. (Westside, 407 W. 43rd St. 307-4100.)

From the Mississippi Delta—In eleven scenes, Endesha Ida Mae Holland dramatizes her own rise (and journey) from the Delta (where she had been a teen-age prostitute) to the University of Minnesota and triumph in academia. The leading character, though, is her mother, a midwife called Aint Baby, who is very well portrayed by Cheryl Lynn Bruce. The role of the author is split between Ms. Bruce, Sybil Walker, and Jacqueline Williams, and the result is a lively and merry evening. (Circle in the Square Downtown, 159 Bleecker St. 254-6330.)

Ghosts—A production of Ibsen's play, with April Shawhan, Arnie Burton, and Michae Levin. (Pearl, 125 W. 22nd St. 645-7708 Closes March 14.)

Grandchild of Kings—Harold Prince's enthralling adaptation of the first two volumes o Sean O'Casey's memoirs is set—beautifully—by Eugene Lee in a square in Dublin. Th performances, all of them satisfying, are by the members of the Irish Repertory Theatre Company; Padraic Moyles, Patrick Fitzgerald, and Chris O'Neill are Sean as child, young man, and old man, and the invaluable Pauline Flanagan is Sean's mother. Traditional Irish songs and dances accompany the action every inch of the way. (2/24/92) (Theatre for the New City, 155 First Ave., at 10th St. 477-7900.)

INNOCENT ERÉNDIRA AND HER HEARTLESS GRANDMOTHER—An adaptation of a novella by Gabriel García Márquez; directed by Jorge Alí Triana. Performed in Spanish; simultaneous-English-translation sets are available. (Repertorio Español, Gramercy Arts Theatre, 138 E. 27th St. 889-2850.)

JEAN COCTEAU REPERTORY—Presenting, in rotating repertory, Bertolt Brecht's **GALILEO** and Friedrich Schiller's **MARY STUART**. (Bouwerie Lane Theatre, 330 Bowery, at Bond St. 677-0060.)

JULIE HALSTON'S LIFETIME OF COMEDY—For up-to-the-minute coverage of what it is like to be "divorced, over thirty, hormonally imbalanced," you can't do better than the wit and wisdom of this multi-talented actress-comedienne-sage. She's a little like Joan Rivers, a little like Joan Collins, and a little like St. Joan. Also a little like ZaSu Pitts. Among our favorite moments in this autobiographical show are the story of events leading up to Miss Halston's tragic divorce, the visit to the breast doctor, and the ritual reading and textual analysis of the *Times* wedding announcements. (Actors Playhouse, 100 Seventh Ave. S. 691-6226.)

A LIFE IN THE THEATRE—F. Murray Abraham and Anthony Fusco in a revival of David Mamet's 1977 play. (Jewish Repertory Theatre, 344 E. 14th St. 505-2667. Closes March 8.)

MARVIN'S ROOM—A play about dying, suffering, and sacrifice in one family, written in a style so frisky as to set the teeth permanently on edge. There is a fine performance by Mark Rosenthal as a smoldering young man. Also with Alice Drummond, Laura Esterman, and Tim Monsion. Scott McPherson is the dramatist, David Petrarca the director. (Minetta Lane Theatre, 18 Minetta Lane, east of Sixth Ave., between W. 3rd and Bleecker Sts. 420-8000.)

THE MOST HAPPY FELLA—This is one musical we think the world could be without and feel no sorrow. The story of a girl forced to content herself with some old duffer because some other old duffer wanted to teach everyone a lesson about making do with what life has to offer—it's pseudo opera superimposed on pseudo Americana. As for Gerald Gutierrez's Goodspeed Opera production, it's your basic slightly-better-than-average dinner-theatre revival. What's the rumpus? (2/24/92) (Booth, 222 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

PRIVATE LIVES—Joan Collins and Simon Jones in a revival of the 1930 Noël Coward comedy, which Arvin Brown directed. (3/2/92) (Broadhurst, 235 W. 44th St. 239-6200.)

THE REAL LIVE BRADY BUNCH—Episodes from the acclaimed TV series, reënacted by the Annoyance Theatre, of Chicago. Something called "The Real Live Game Show" comes first. (Village Gate, 160 Bleecker St. 475-5120.)

RETURN TO THE FORBIDDEN PLANET—Gabriel Barré, Julee Cruise, Robert McCormick, and Louis Tucci are all appealing in this light-minded entertainment, a London import that won the Laurence Olivier Award for best musical in a year when it might have gone to "Miss Saigon" (whose producer's subsequent indignation led to the creation of a new award category). The show—a patchwork of beloved pop songs stitched together with Shakespeareana—has almost nothing to do with the cult movie it is based on, and still less to do with "The Tempest." Written and directed by Bob Carlton, it is more than anything else an occasion to laugh a bit and rock out a lot. (Variety Arts, Third Ave. at 14th St. 239-6200.)

EARCH AND DESTROY—Griffin Dunne has the lead in this dark comedy by Howard Korder, which had its première at California's South Coast Rep, in 1990. (Reviewed in this issue.) (Circle in the Square, 50th St. west of Broadway. 239-6200.)

IGHT UNSEEN—Donald Margulies' engrossing new play, which is about an Eric Fischl-type painter who decides to look up an old girlfriend he once treated badly, takes the contemporary art scene to task. Technically, it also plays around with time a good deal, though never sloppily or gratuitously. You end up being affected by a curious kind of

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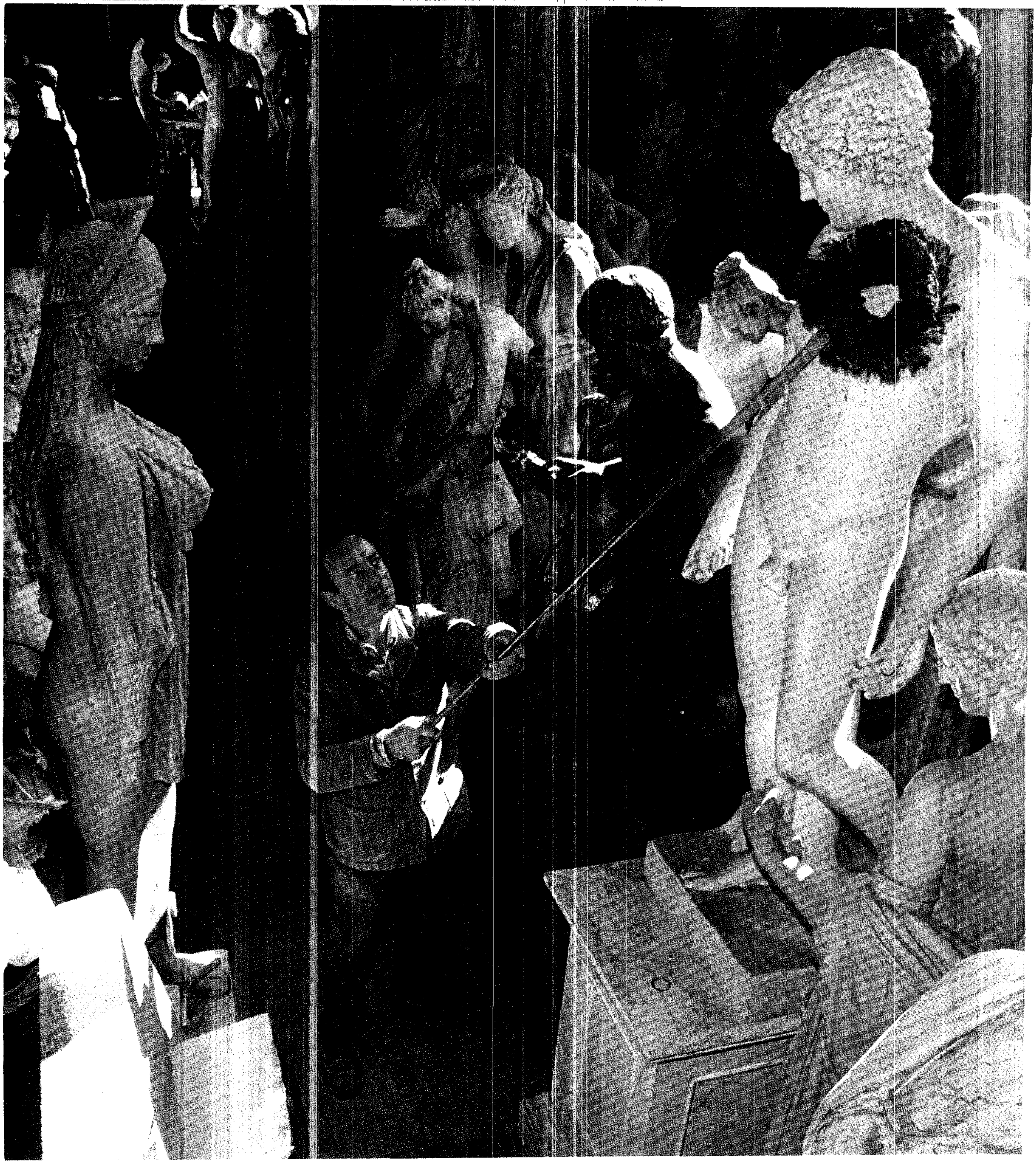

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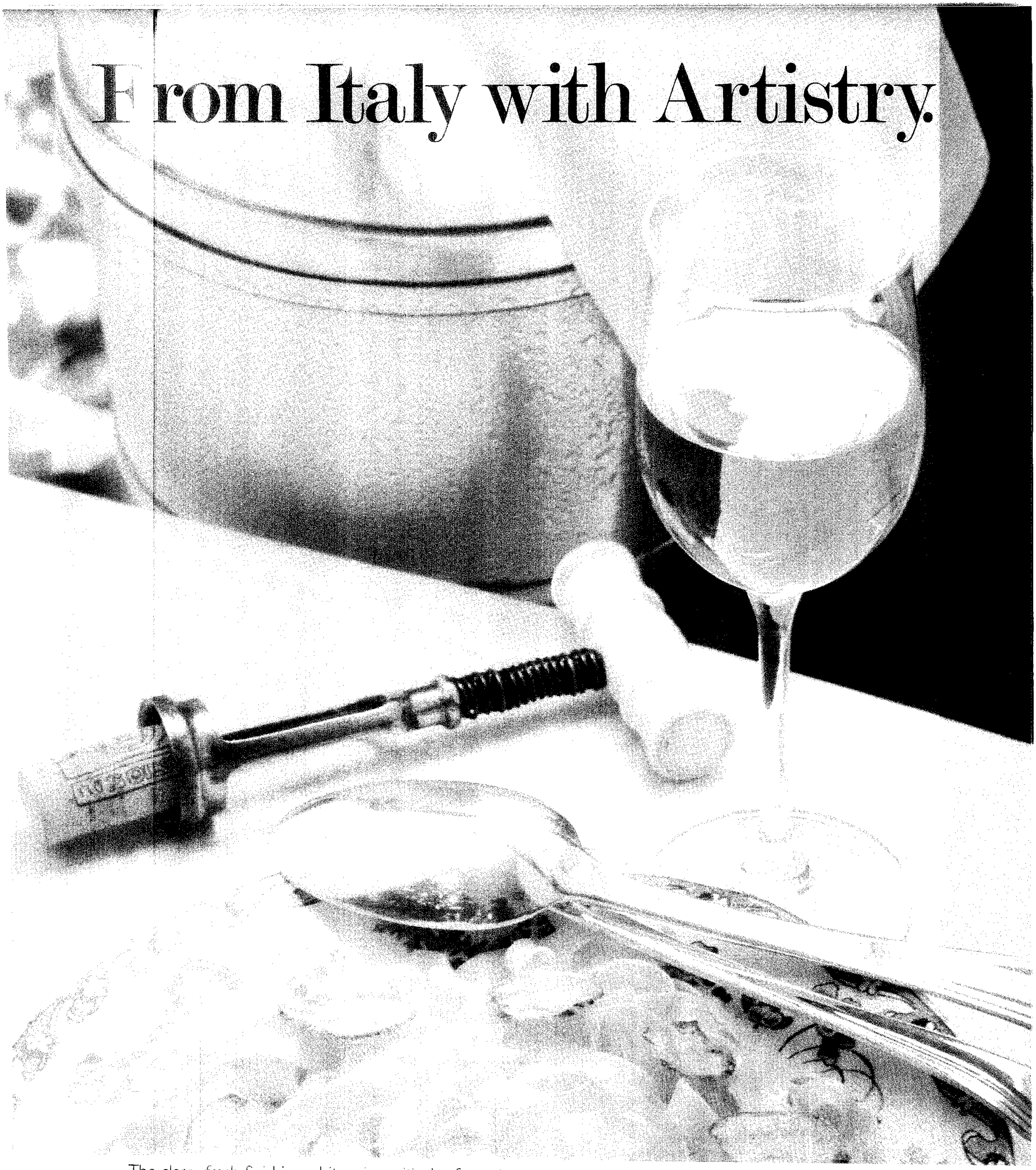

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VINO

Italian Wines. The Quality of Life.

© 1992 ITALIAN INSTITUTE FOR FOREIGN TRADE/ICE, ITALIAN TRADE COMMISSION, WINE CENTER 499 PARK AVENUE, NEW YORK, NY 10022 resonance—it's earned, not something you've brought with you into the theatre. (2/3/92) (Manhattan Theatre Club, at City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 581-7907.)

The Substance of Fire—Jon Robin Baitz's play, which ran at Playwrights Horizons last spring, moves to Lincoln Center. The cast once again comprises Patrick Breen, Sarah Jessica Parker, Ron Rifkin, Jon Tenney, and Maria Tucci. (Reviewed in this issue.) (Mitzi E. Newhouse, Lincoln Center. 239-6200.)

Time Flies When You're Alive—A one-man play written and performed by Paul Linke. Presented by New York Theatre Workshop. (Perry Street Theatre, 31 Perry St. 302-6989. Closes March 8.)

Tubes—A performance work by Blue Man Group about art and other matters. (Astor Place Theatre, 434 Lafayette St. 254-4370.)

LONG RUNS

AND THE WORLD GOES 'ROUND: THE KANDER & EBB MUSICAL: A musical revue, with Karen Ziémba, Joel Blum, Terry Burrell, Marcus Lovett, and Marin Mazzie. (Westside, 407 W. 43rd St. 307-4100.)... **BREAKING LEGS:** The Mafia meets Off Broadway. Philip Bosco and Vincent Gardenia play a pair of mobsters who back a new play in order to win a young dramatist for Gardenia's daughter. Tom Dulack wrote the comedy; John Tillinger directed it. With Larry Storch, Karen Valentine, Ronald Maccone, and Nick Wyman. (Promenade, Broadway at 76th St. 580-1313.)... **CATS:** Some twenty poems about cats by T. S. Eliot, set to music by Andrew Lloyd Webber. A mighty spectacle about mighty little, owing its effectiveness to Trevor Nunn's direction and *to John Napier's sets and costumes.* (Winter Garden, Broadway at 50th St. 239-6200.)... **THE FANTASTICKS:** The longest-running long run turns thirty-two in May. (Sullivan Street Playhouse, 181 Sullivan St., at Bleecker St. 674-3838.)... **FOREVER PLAID:** Stuart Ross's loving tongue-in-cheek salute to the "guy groups" of the fifties is a real treat. Bring your mom. Hell, bring the whole family. (Steve McGraw's, 158 W. 72nd St. 595-7400.)... **GRAND HOTEL:** The dazzling imagination of Tommy Tune's direction and choreography and the dazzling scenery by Tony Walton almost make up for the inner vacancy of this show, but not quite. The story and characters are skimpy and the music is undistinguished. Nevertheless, there isn't a boring moment. The cast includes Cyd Charisse, John Schneider, John Wylie, Timothy Jerome, Lynnette Perry, and Chip Zien. (Gershwin, 51st St. west of Broadway. 586-6510.)... **LIPS TOGETHER, TEETH APART:** Two couples share a beach house on Fire Island over the Fourth of July weekend, in Terrence McNally's very funny play about a number of serious matters. Christine Baranski, Joanne Camp, Jonathan Hadary, and Brian Kerwin make up the cast. John Tillinger was the director. (Lucille Lortel, 121 Christopher St. 924-8782.)... **LOST IN YONKERS:** There's not one glimmer of honesty or authenticity in this family melodrama by Neil Simon. Set in Yonkers during the Second World War, it's about what happens when a cowering, pathetic man has to leave his two adolescent sons with his intimidating mother for the better part of a year. (Richard Rodgers, 226 W. 46th St. 221-1211.)... **LES MISÉRABLES:** The stars of this musical adaptation of the Victor Hugo novel are John Napier's settings and David Hersey's lighting. (Imperial, 249 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)... **MISS SAIGON:** Oh, the horror! The horror! (Broadway Theatre, Broadway at 53rd St. 239-6200.)... **NUNSENSE:** A musical comedy by Dan Goggin. (Douglas Fairbanks, 432 W. 42nd St. 239-4321.)... **PAGEANT:** A musical spoof of beauty contests. Book and lyrics by Bill Russell and Frank Kelly and music by Albert Evans. Conceived and directed by Robert Longbottom. (Blue Angel, 321 W. 44th St. 262-3333.)... **PERFECT CRIME:** A murder mystery by Warren Manzi. (Theatre Four, 424 W. 55th St. 695-3401.)... **THE PHANTOM OF THE OPERA:** This much ballyhooed Andrew Lloyd Webber musical is fun—if you're not bothered by theatre that cares not a whit for words and contains not one ghost of an idea. Except for the sets (by Maria Björnson), everything about the show is negligible. (Majestic, 245 W. 44th St. 239-6200.)... **THE SECRET GARDEN:** This lovely musical adaptation of the classic children's story by Frances Hodgson Burnett isn't just a kiddie show. Subtle, charming, intelligent, and wholly literary in its approach to adaptation, it manages both to be faithful to the spirit of the book and to comment on the particular moment in time that produced it. (St. James, 246 W. 44th St. 239-6200.)... **SONG OF SINGAPORE:** A musical with a promising concept: turn a Polish veterans' hall into a Singapore night club, circa 1941, and spill murder and mayhem onto the premises. Unfortunately, the lavish settings (by John Lee Beatty) and the musical talent cannot conceal a very thin story and a host of excruciatingly bad jokes. (17 Irving Pl., at 15th St. 228-0844.)... **THE WILL ROGERS FOLLIES:** The sets by Tony Walton, the direction and choreography by Tommy Tune, the costumes by Willa Kim, and the row upon row of Ziegfeld girls make a feast for the eyes, but the funny bone and heart are neglected. Keith Carradine makes an amusing and engaging Rogers, but that is not enough, despite Cy Coleman's pleasant score. (Palace, Broadway at 47th St. 730-8200.)

DANCE

Brian Boitano and Katarina Witt, the figure skaters, are trying to do something hard—something harder, maybe, than completing a triple lutz. They are trying to build a sometime partnership on ice, and with a romantic flavor, out of two careers basically devoted to solo skating (their show this year, titled "Chrysler Skating '92," which will come to Madison Square Garden on March 6, brings them together only intermittently). As each of them stressed to us recently in separate conversations, the kind of skating they do in tandem is properly called neither pairs skating nor ice dancing, both of which entail years of joint practice. "We call our work shadow skating," Mr. Boitano said. "We make mirror images of each other. In practice, with our choreographer, Sandra Bezic, I'll tend to say to Kat, 'O.K., just go on and skate and I'll match you.' The two of us are more of a unit now than we used to be—theatrically, that is. In our first two shows together—'Skating' and 'Skating II'—we did some lifts; this year, we're not doing any. Other things that a conventional skating pair would do, like the death spiral, are impossible for us to learn this late, when we're both in our twenties. But we connect in important ways—facially, emotionally—and we're both very aggressive on the ice." In other words, the quality of their movement—what a dancegoer might call the dance element of their skating—makes them compatible.

We asked the skaters about their dance background. Mr. Boitano had none. Ms. Witt noted that her East German training had included a modern-dance improvisatory style invented by the choreographer Greta Palucca. "It was very abstract," Ms. Witt said. "I had a difficult time improvising; I was very shy." As for ballet, she has always enjoyed watching it, and she studied it from early childhood. "But I didn't really like that, either," she said. "It seemed so stiff, and it was so difficult always to go from one corner of the room to the other. I liked floating on the ice. I loved skating."

Feld Ballets/NY—March 3 at 8: "Ah Scarlatti," "Clave," "To the Naked Eye," and "Endsong."... ¶ March 4 at 8: "Contra Pose," "Savage Glance," and "Wolfgang Strategies."... ¶ March 5 at 8: "Ah Scarlatti," "Fauna," "Clave," and "Endsong."... ¶ March 6 at 8: "Common Ground," "Savage Glance," and "Wolfgang Strategies."... ¶ March 7 at 8: "Ion," "Evoe," "Love Song Waltzes," and "The Jig Is Up."... ¶ March 8 at 2: "Ah Scarlatti," "Kore," "To the Naked Eye," and "Common Ground."... ¶ March 8 at 7:30: "Ion," "Fauna," "Savage Glance," and "Wolfgang Strategies."... ¶ March 10 at 8: "Ah Scarlatti," "Savage Glance," and "Wolfgang Strategies."... ¶ March 11 at 8: "Clave," "Fauna," "Love Song Waltzes," and "Skara Brae." (Joyce Theatre, 175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 242-0800. Through March 22.)

Gail Conrad—Presenting "Walk Around the Block (An Urban Riff)." (Theatre for the New City, 155 First Ave., at 10th St. 254-1109. March 5-8 at 8. Through March 15.)

Doug Elkins Dance Company—In "Translucent Illustrations of Idiot People." (Dance Theatre Workshop, 219 W. 19th St. 924-0077. March 4-7 at 8 and March 8 at 3.)

Brian Boitano and Katarina Witt—In "Chrysler Skating '92." (Madison Square Garden. 465-6000. March 6 at 8.)

Benefit—The Mark Morris Dance Group, Garth Fagan Dance, LadyGourd Sangoma, the Doug Elkins Dance Company, and the musician Lenny Pickett perform on behalf of Dance Theatre Workshop. (Joyce Theatre, 175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. March 9 at 7:30. For information about tickets, call 691-4823.)

NIGHT LIFE

"I'LL give you an average week," Trey Anastasio, of the young rock outfit Phish, told us recently. "Let's say we play on a Wednesday night. We play until two. We get to the hotel by four. We sleep exactly eight hours and get woken up by the maids at noon. We hobble out to the van. We try to find a Denny's. We eat breakfast, drive for four hours, and get out of the van just in time for a sound check. We sit backstage for two hours eating some kind of measly meal. Then we go onstage, play until two, get to the hotel by four...."

Phish, which toured for nine months last year and will stop in at Roseland on March 14, can be maddeningly eclectic, rolling through art-rock, improvisational jazz, and bluegrass with a lot of pomp and circumstance. (The band's major-label début, "A Picture of Nectar," ends with a reprise, which says it all.) Over the past few years, however, Phish's exhaustive touring has won them a loyal, far-flung, mostly college-age following. The band is well known for its extended jams, not to mention its members' ability to play while jumping up and down on trampolines. Phish is a strange collision of the solemn and the silly, of earnest musicianship and a sort of hippie abandon. The band has been together since 1983. Asked how long they plan to be eating breakfast at Denny's, band members cite Duke Ellington's orchestra, which, of course, played for decades. "If we stayed together that long," says Jon Fishman, "who knows what it could sound like?"

(A highly arbitrary listing, in which boldface type is used to pick out a few of the more notable performers in town. . . . ¶ Musicians and night-club proprietors live complicated lives that are subject to last-minute change; it is therefore always advisable to call ahead.)

ALGONQUIN HOTEL, 59 W. 44th St. (840-6800)—The Welsh-born chanteuse **IRIS WILLIAMS,** who sings a fine Welsh rendition of "Amazing Grace," made her New York cabaret début here last year, in a well-received program of Jerome Kern. Ms. Williams is now in the midst of a follow-up engagement, this time examining Gershwin, Rodgers and Hart, Edith Piaf, and others. Shows at nine-thirty Tuesdays through Thursdays, and at nine-thirty and eleven-thirty on Fridays and Saturdays.

BALLROOM, 253 W. 28th St. (244-3005)—A sleek, green-walled room with brass railings and mounted O'Keeffian animal skulls. Look closer and you'll find that the skulls are wearing earrings. After the show, be sure to check out the adjoining restaurant/tapas bar, which looks like the indoor food market of your dreams, and features a mural filled with people resembling Bob, Carol, Ted, and Alice. All Four Fun appears for five days beginning on March 10. Shows Tuesdays through Thursdays at nine, and Fridays and Saturdays at nine and eleven-fifteen. Closed Mondays.

BIRDLAND, 2745 Broadway, at 105th St. (749-2228)—Many of the fine jazz musicians who visit this jazz house are honored—if that's the word—by having their portraits done, "in concert," by the house artist. These impressionistic renderings round out a glossy décor that includes flying-saucer light fixtures, burgundy velvet drapes, and some neon wading birds. Music from nine. Dining.

BLUE NOTE, 131 W. 3rd St., near Sixth Ave. (475-8592)—This blue-on-blue club is the place to find big-league jazz artists; it's an institution and it knows it: how many other clubs sell their own belt buckles? Drummer **ELVIN JONES,** of the famed Pontiac, Michigan, family that includes his brothers Hank and the late Thad (they're the Marsalises of the Midwest), leads a combo here March 3-8. As the drummer for John Coltrane's seminal sixties group, Jones established himself as the leading avant-garde jazz drummer of the time. He is still a powerful and innovative musician, whose drumming is an onslaught of cross-rhythms and thunderclap accents. And the strange, guttural noises he makes while pounding the kit only add to his intensity. The **STEVE TURRE** sextet is also on the bill. Unusual sonorities continue as the jazz-tuba up-and-comer **SAM PILAFIAN** heads an ensemble on March 9. **MACEO PARKER** and **JOHNNIE JOHNSON** begin work on March 10. Music from nine.

BOTTOM LINE, 15 W. 4th St., at Mercer St. (228-6300)—This big, airy folk-and-rock club is the site of a lot of music-industry bashes. If you have trouble getting tickets to the early show, it's usually because some record company has bought the place out. The atmosphere here, as a result, can be a bit weird: the record-company types have to have fun, because their own artists are onstage, but they can't have too much fun, because their bosses are watching. The later shows, though they're not as well attended and though they tend to rumble off into the small hours, are much looser in spirit. **NRBQ,** a remarkable outfit that's been around since the late sixties and that is impossible to categorize, will be here on March 6, playing their eclectic mixture of rock, blues, folk, pop, jazz, and any cover tune you can name. Shows at eight and eleven. Burgers, fries, and other things to make your heart beat faster.

BRADLEY'S, 70 University Pl., at 11th St. (228-6440)—Next door, there's a bustling, garishly lit market. Within the narrow walls of this venerable piano-and-bass preserve, however, everything is easy on the eyes and ears. Guitarist **KEVIN EUBANKS** and pianist **JAMES WILLIAMS** are on hand through March 7, with varying bassists. Music from ten. Dining.

CARLYLE HOTEL, Madison Ave. at 76th St. (744-1600)—The pastel uptown spa known as the Café Carlyle is home to **EARTHA KITT** beginning March 3. Ms. Kitt has a staggering list of stage, TV, and recording credits. Most of her songs are tales of men and money, and she doesn't so much sing her lyrics as growl them, prowling the stage like a lioness protecting her cubs. Tuesdays through Saturdays at eight-forty-five and ten-forty-five. . . . ¶ Across the hall, in Bemelmans Bar, **RONNY WHYTE** presides at the piano from nine-thirty Tuesdays through Saturdays.

CONDON'S, 117 E. 15th St. (254-0960)—In the shadow of the Zeckendorf Towers sits this stucco-walled grotto, whose intimate scale makes it a fine spot for jazz. Pianist **AHMAD JAMAL** leads a trio through a two-week tour here as of March 3. Shows Tuesdays through Sundays at nine-thirty and eleven-thirty, Fridays and Saturdays at nine-thirty, eleven-thirty, and one.

DIVA, 306 E. 81st St. (650-1928)—A lovely little restaurant and piano bar that offers Italian fare and, Tuesdays through Saturdays, the musings of pianist **CHARLES DEFOREST.** As a composer, DeForest works in the hallowed tradition of Cole Porter, and over the past couple of years his work has been championed emphatically by Tony Bennett. Music from eight-thirty. Closed Sundays.

FAT TUESDAY'S, 190 Third Ave., at 17th St. (533-7902)—Through the iffy-looking side door, down the famous fun-house tunnel that's lined with mirrors and corrugated tin, and down a short flight of stairs, you'll find this softly lit, low-ceilinged, roughly Manhattan-shaped jazz preserve. The **CHRIS CONNOR** trio is here through March 8. On Mondays, guitarist-inventor **LES PAUL,** the Thomas Edison of reverb, leads a trio. Music from eight. Dining.

JEWEL BOX LOUNGE, 323 W. 44th St. (262-3333)—An intimate, glittery cabaret whose name describes it perfectly. The crown jewel here just now is **BUD E. LUV,** a Vegas-style crooner with some big rings of his own, as well as a pompadour and a winning collection of smoking jackets. Mr. Luv takes his name from a character in Jerry Lewis's "The Nutty Professor," though the latter-day Luv is in a more lighthearted vein than Lewis's, who was a caustic sendup of Dean Martin. This Mr. Luv has dead aim, and he pulls off a feat: he wrings laughs from a concept you may have thought was exhausted. Shows Tuesdays through Fridays at ten, Saturdays at nine and at midnight, and Sundays at nine.

KNICKERBOCKER, 33 University Pl., at 9th St. (228-8490)—A busy bar-and-grill in the piano-bass district. The musicians set up in the dining room, a clubby-looking space with leather banquettes and well-preserved collectibles: Sunday *Herald Tribune* covers, First World War posters, Hirschfeld cartoons. Up front, at the bar, you can keep your eye on the musicians, the conversationalists, and sidewalk life. **STEVE KUHN** and **DAVID FINCK** are at work here March 4-7, and **JUDY CARMICHAEL** and **MIKE HASHIM** start up on March 11. On Sundays you can catch jazz-and-blues singer **TESS MARSALIS,** backed up by a piano and bass. Music from about nine-thirty.

MANNY'S CAR WASH, 1558 Third Ave., at 87th St. (369-2583)—A bright spot on the little-heralded Upper East Side club scene. The Virginia-born **HOLMES BROTHERS,** who appear here on March 5, toiled in obscurity until a few years ago, when critics and record-company scouts began to take notice of their propulsive blend of backwater blues, roadhouse R. & B., and gospel. The brothers have several decades of club experience under their belts, and their shows are muscular, foot-stirring displays of solid musicianship. They recently released their second album, "Where It's At." The veteran bluesman **CLARENCE (GATEMOUTH) BROWN,** who begins a two-night stand on March 11, is not content with one-four-five chord structures and the same old standards. His live shows are an unusual assemblage of swing, boogie-woogie, pop, soul, and R. & B.—and, of course, blues. A recent set included a Duke Ellington tune and the Righteous Brothers hit "Unchained Melody." Brown, who is in his seventies, is tall and lanky, and is given to wearing Stetson hats and rodeo apparel. He's loose yet imposing, and he gets a savage sound from his guitar. Sets from nine-fifteen, except Sundays, when they begin at eight-forty-five.

BONEYARD

By today's standards, the art of scrimshaw—the carving of designs on animal teeth and bones, traditionally those of whales—is about as politically correct a hobby as cockfighting or bearbaiting. But armed with the knowledge that international law prohibits today's scrimshanders from using bone or ivory acquired after 1973, you can view the historical-scrimshaw exhibit in the A. A. Low Building, at the South Street Seaport Museum, with a clear conscience. Called "'A Mariner's Fancy': The Whaleman's Art of Scrimshaw" (the title comes from "Moby-Dick"), the show comprises more than two hundred pieces, depicting ships, seascapes, sailors, women, and assorted patriotic motifs.

Much of the charm of the designs comes from their rather stiff, studied look, as if the nineteenth-century whalers who carved them were art students afraid of submitting inexact work to a hypercritical teacher. (If the truth be told, the formality of the engravings stems largely from the fact that a great number were simply copied from existing illustrations.) Of course, the whalers' objective was not so much to display their talent as to kill time aboard ship.

In addition to the purely decorative pieces, the exhibit includes functional items made specifically for the womenfolk on shore: knitting needles, yarn winders, ornate pie crimpers, rococo cribbage sets (made from walrus tusks), and busks, the fancy name for the center stays of corsets. These last were made of baleen, and were considered the most personal gifts a tar could give his lass. The mildly perverse fascination of the show lies in its essential irony: that these gentle, graceful carvings were made by artisans who were dealing in the business of death.

MARQUEE, 547 W. 21st St. (929-3257)—A rock club, just off the West Side Highway, that is one of the city's main venues for college-radio fare. **TRIP SHAKESPEARE,** who'll be here on March 4, is a remarkable, Minneapolis-based psychedelic-pop quartet. The band recently released its second major-label album, "Lulu," and it's just about impossible to stop listening to it—it *is* a lulu. Three or four songs sound like instant classics, and in a world awash in sampling and twenty-four-track tinkering, it's one of those rare, swinging five-star albums that might come across even better live. Pop singer **ALISON MOYET,** who comes in on March 6, doesn't perform live very frequently, but onstage her voice has the same power and range it has on recordings. She can modulate from a breathy whisper to a clear falsetto to a raspy, full-throated belt. Moyet's most recent album is "Hoodoo," and she and **JULES SHEAR** will be doing an acoustic show this time around.

MAXWELL'S, 1039 Washington St., Hoboken. (1-201 798-4064)—A plain blue back room whose far wall is decorated with round things: a Frisbee, some singles, and the woofer from a speaker cabinet, to name a few. The beer of choice here is Rolling Rock—by a landslide—and the crowd may make you feel as if you have a midterm to study for, but many of the bands that play here today will

NIGHT LIFE–Cont'd

be playing somewhere more expensive tomorrow. Shows at ten on Thursdays, and at eleven on Fridays and Saturdays.

Rainbow & Stars, *30 Rockefeller Plaza. (632-5000)*—A moondust-in-your-hair cabaret where a club soda costs, well, a *lot*. There are plenty of niceties if you're so inclined: an ear-popping express elevator in which you can mingle with the famous; tables scattered with plastic diamonds and sapphires; and rest-room attendants who hover near the sink asking "Is the water too warm?" **HELEN SCHNEIDER** begins an engagement on March 3, in which she'll be focussing on the music of Harold Arlen. Shows from nine. Dining. Closed Mondays.

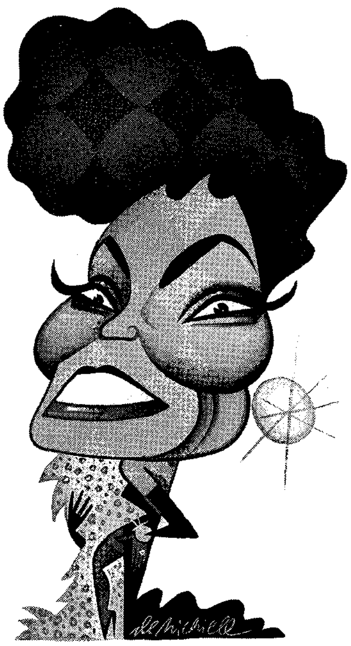
Russian Tea Room, 150 W. 57th St. (265-0947)—In this landmark's upstairs cabaret, B. J. Ward (a diva manquée who claims she's been to the opera "but never had really good seats") will deliver a trenchant spoof of operatic shenanigans, on March 8. Shows Sundays at eight and ten-thirty. Dining and, of course, drinking.

Sweet Basil, 88 Seventh Ave. S., at Bleecker St. (242-1785)—If you arrive late for a show at this celebrated shrine of jazz, you run the risk of being seated in the glass-enclosed terrace, which means you'll need a periscope to see the show and a parka to live through it. Otherwise, Sweet Basil is just the right environment for patrons—chiefly because it has a silence-or-else policy during shows. **PETE LEVIN, CHUCK LOEB,** and **LENNY WHITE** work out March 3-8; **TERUMASA HINO'S** quintet kicks off on March 10. An electrified big band belonging to trumpeter **MILES EVANS** is in action on Mondays. Tee-off time is ten. Dining.

Tramps, 45 W. 21st St. (727-7788)—Thanks to low lighting, muralled pillars, ironwork, and a beautifully restored tin ceiling, this loft space manages to feel homey. The sound system can be overwhelming, but the place is big enough to accommodate both those who want to lose their hearing and those who don't. Zydeco, soul, blues, and rock are the main order of business here. **C.J. CHENIER AND HIS RED HOT LOUISIANA BAND** come in on March 3; **MASABUMI KIKUCHI'S** septet appears on March 4 (beginning at eight-thirty); **SHARON SHANNON** holds forth on March 5. Sets are usually at eight and eleven weeknights, eight-thirty and eleven-thirty on Fridays and Saturdays. Dining.

Village Vanguard, 178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. (255-4037)—This windowless, slice-of-pie-shaped basement has an illustrious history that embraces everyone from Judy Holliday to Lenny Bruce, from Pete Seeger and Leadbelly to Miles Davis and Sonny Rollins. The décor is a little faded, like an attic full of memorabilia. **ARTHUR TAYLOR,** a drummer with great finesse, brings in his group March 3-8. Taylor has a formidable technique, but he *uses it to energize his band members rather* than beat them into submission. When a musician takes a solo, Taylor stays with him at every turn, commenting, challenging, embellishing. And, like a good conductor, he can keep tabs on everyone at once. **MAL WALDRON'S** trio is in action as of March 10. Mondays are reserved for the **VANGUARD JAZZ ORCHESTRA.** Music after nine-thirty.

Wetlands, 161 Hudson St. (966-4225)—A relatively young club that has already managed to make a scene. Wetlands is usually thought of as a Deadhead hangout, but the club has also been the launching pad for a generation of young New York bands like Blues Traveler and the Spin Doctors. Shows here can be absurdly sweaty and tight—the club seems to have a hard time turning people away—and it can be hard to get a view of the stage. Still, Wetlands is such a maze of a place that there's always some mellow corner to retire to. **LOUP GAROU** is here on March 3. Shows from ten.



Eartha Kitt at the Carlyle

EDGE OF NIGHT LIFE

We watched the young man walk into Etcetera, on upper First Avenue, his face longer and darker than an Alaskan oil slick. It was bad enough, he said, that a clammy, cold Monday night had already dampened his favorite Amsterdam Avenue hangouts. But he couldn't stay home, *either, not with* Monday Night Football over and the Olympic flame blown out. He admitted to the bartender that he hadn't known Murphy Brown was pregnant. He thought it was a terrible idea.

So the young man had come crosstown. There were always people in First Avenue bars. And the big street-level windows at Etcetera (1470 First Avenue, at 76th Street), which expose its duplex interior to any passerby's glance, revealed possibilities. At least there was a pool table, ESPN, and an outside chance of female companionship. He claimed he usually didn't seek out East Side women—they were "too much of a challenge"—but that tonight his luck could hardly get any worse.

So he walked up to a slightly out-of-place, slightly older-than-himself Armani-suited woman and innocuously asked her why a lady so attractive should be up so late on such a wretched evening. She replied that she was here from Lima, Ohio, on business. That that afternoon, while she was on her way home from the gift show at the Javits Center, a man had driven by on his motorcycle and snatched her briefcase out of her hand. That the keys to the apartment she was staying in were in the case. That the police, after apprehending the thief, had classified the briefcase as evidence, and the officer authorized to release its contents had gone for the evening. That she was currently waiting for her night-court stenographer friend, on whose couch she could stay, to get out of work. That she couldn't wait to get out of here and never come back to "Helltown" again.

The desperate young man peeled himself off the bar, stood in her silence for a moment, and turned to face the window looking onto the empty street. Then he turned back and asked whether she knew that Murphy Brown was pregnant.

IN ANOTHER CATEGORY—PERFORMANCE ART, ETC.

Bunraku—A presentation of the National Puppet Theatre of Japan. (City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 581-7907. March 10 at 7:30 and March 11 at 2 and 8. Through March 14.)

P.S. 122—March 5-8 at 8: Steve Gross in "Worthy." Through March 15. . . . ¶ March 6 at 9: Donna Bailey, Sadie Benning, Hank Smith, and others. . . . ¶ March 7 at 9: Eileen Myles, Yasuko Yokoshi, Chris Cochrane, and others. (150 First Ave., at 9th St. 477-5288.)

ART

Hunt Slonem's wonderful paintings of birds behind bars are part of the everyday story of his life, for the very simple reason that this artist lives and works in what is essentially an aviary. When you walk in to Slonem's loft, the first thing you're aware of is the din, a tropical treetop shriekfest that serves as this artist's working music. Only then do the giant cages and the sixty or so feathered friends reveal themselves, as if they were only a mirage. And it isn't until a little later during your visit—maybe as you're looking out the window onto the gridded intersections of East Houston Street—that you see that you're in a big cage, too. This discovery, while sobering, isn't all bad. For one thing, it instantly establishes a strong feeling of solidarity with the birds, unpleasant as many of them are, and there is a noble swell to that sensation.

The current exhibition of Slonem's recent bird paintings, along with *one wall installation of bright molted* feathers (Helander, 415 West Broadway; through March 21), embodies this existential paradox with enormous ease and modesty. Slonem is a prolific artist, who can, for instance, dash off several small canvases in a single day—who seems, in fact, to work in a mantra-like continuum. Yet each of these simple paintings is a specific, complex formal poem. All, of course, are gridded, most of them with latticed lines scored with a paintbrush handle, but Slonem's grids are so variable as to suggest some sort of cosmic bondage joke—along with eliciting a laugh, perhaps, at Agnes Martin's expense. Depending on the density of the grid, the number of birds depicted, the colors of the birds, and, not least, the time of day, the style of Slonem's works may range from a kind of lyric near-minimalism all the way to the baroque. One painting may evoke the wistful power of Whistler's nocturnes or of Monet's haystacks and cathedrals while another conveys the chromatic brashness of Futurist street scenes, Léger's construction workers, or Frank Stella's histrionic "Indian Birds."

MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

Metropolitan Museum, Fifth Ave. at 82nd St.—Barbizon, in the Forest of Fontainebleau, was a meeting place and inspiration for several French landscape painters in the eighteen-fifties and sixties. A large sampling of works by these artists—Théodore Rousseau, Jean-François Millet, Jean-Baptiste Camille Corot, and others—is on view. Through May 10. . . . ¶ The recent donation of the Perls collection—a hundred and sixty-three objects from the kingdom of Benin—has substantially redefined the museum's African holdings. This exhibition of the collection is a welcome relief from the rigid theatre of many of the museum's blockbusters: it enables viewers to make their own discoveries. The art from Benin, dating from the sixteenth century through the nineteenth, is *quite naturalistic and of high quality.* There are exquisite brass heads of kings and queen mothers that feature the precious coral-bead collars worn by royalty; a number of plaques, depicting processions and the court hierarchy, which adorned the pillars of the royal palace; bells, altar rings, and numerous other ceremonial objects; and a brass rooster, which as a symbol of power, would have honored a queen mother.... ¶ “American Rococo, 1750-1775.” Furniture, silver, paintings, engravings, ceramics, and glass made in pre-Revolutionary America. Through May 17.... ¶ A group of Alpine landscape sketches and local genre scenes by John Singer Sargent, made during a youthful jaunt through the Bernese Oberland, in 1870. Through March 22.... ¶ The redesigned and renovated Arms and Armor galleries are open, and jammed to the hilt. The central Equestrian Court is still here, regally appointed, and it is now surrounded by eight new displays of Japanese, European, Islamic, and American weaponry and armor.... ¶ “The Lotus Transcendent.” The Eilenberg collection, from which this show has been selected, is not particularly comprehensive nor focussed on grand masterpieces, but it does sparkle in many unexpected ways. For instance, it includes a group of bronze sculptures from Indonesia that many consider to be the finest privately assembled collection of such material in the world.... ¶ Three new permanent galleries are home to more than four hundred nineteenth-century European sculptures and decorative objects.... ¶ Candelabras, snuff boxes, and hotel façades are just some of the subject matters depicted in a show of eighteenth-century French drawings. Through March 15. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 9:30 to 5:15, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 8:45.)

Museum of Modern Art, 11 W. 53rd St.—Works by Cézanne, Derain, Matisse, Picasso, and others from the collection of William S. Paley, who was chairman emeritus of the museum at the time of his death, in 1990. Through April 7.... ¶ “Allegories of Modernism: Contemporary Drawing,” two hundred works by forty American and European artists. Through May 5.... ¶ A small show of recent photographs by Gay Block, of people who risked their lives to save Jews during the Holocaust. Through April 7.... ¶ Twenty-one lamps from the sixties and seventies, including a Noguchi “Akari” lamp and a Castiglioni “Taraxacum” lamp. Alas, no lava is in sight. Through March 29.... ¶ On display on the ground floor are “Cross Check,” “Power Play,” “High Sticking,” and “Hat Trick,” four new chairs by the hockey-loving Frank Gehry. Through March 23. (Open daily, except Wednesdays, 11 to 6, and Thursday evenings until 9.)

Guggenheim Museum, Fifth Ave. at 89th St.—The museum is closed for renovation until late spring.

Whitney Museum of American Art, Madison Ave. at 75th St.—A large survey of paintings, drawings, and prints by Terry Winters. Through May 10.... ¶ The William Wegman retrospective includes nearly two hundred paintings, drawings, photographs, and videotapes. Through April 19.... ¶ “Variations on Themes,” a show of serial works in various graphic mediums, by, among others, Terry Winters, Dennis Adams, Kiki Smith, Donald Judd, and Jasper Johns. Through March 15. (Open Wednesdays, and Fridays through Sundays, 11 to 6; Thursdays, 1 to 8.)

Brooklyn Museum, Eastern Parkway—Seventy “Destructions,” “Accumulations,” and “Cachets” by the inimitable French Nouveau Réaliste Arman. Through April 26.... ¶ “The New Merengue,” an installation in the Grand Lobby, by sculptor Houston Conwill, poet Estella Conwill Majozo, and architect Joseph De Pace. Through May 3.... ¶ “Contemporary Wood Sculpture” is a small show of works by Kenji Fujita, Jane Greengold, Louise Nevelson, and others.... ¶ “Biomorphicism and Organic Abstraction in Twentieth-Century Decorative Arts.” (Open Wednesdays through Sundays, 10 to 5.)

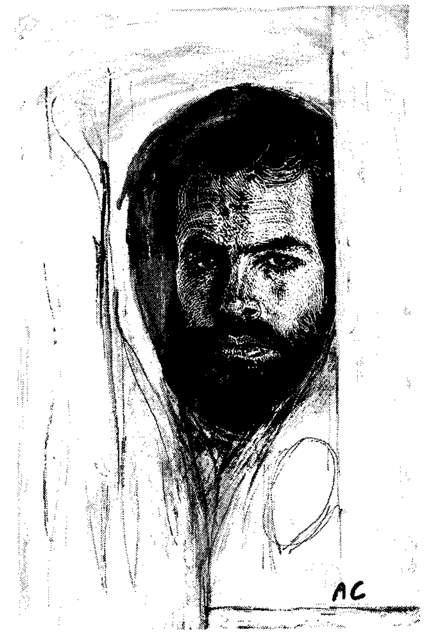
American Craft Museum, 40 W. 53rd St.—Three site-specific installations: Sam Gilliam’s “Windows Go Orange (e.e. cummings),” Robert Kushner’s “Pussy Willows,” and Dale Chihuly’s “Niijima Floats.”... ¶ An exhibition of African textiles woven by means of improvised techniques. Through April 19. (Open Tuesdays, 10 to 8; Wednesdays through Sundays, 10 to 5.)

Dia Center for the Arts, 548 W. 22nd St.—Joseph Beuys’ early-seventies aluminum-glass-and-photo panel work titled “Arena (where I would have got if I had been intelligent).”... ¶ Six large paintings are the centerpiece of Brice Marden’s show of works inspired by the Tang-dynasty poet Cold Mountain. Through May 31.... ¶ “Displacement,” a show of works by Lawrence Weiner. Through April 30.... ¶ On the roof, Dan Graham has created a fine urban park with glass walls, a floor of spongy asphalt tiles, and a squat glass cylinder at its center. The park is elevated above the roof as if it were afloat, and it is very pleasant to spend time up there, especially in the nearby coffee bar/video lounge. (Open Thursdays through Sundays, noon to 6.)

Frick Collection, 1 E. 70th St.—“Italian Art at the Close of the Quattrocento” is a show in two parts: the first is a group of eight works attributed to Antonio Pollaiuolo, including his small bronze “Hercules”; the second is a tour of paintings and sculptures in the collection, focussing on four panels by Piero della Francesca. Through March 29. (Open daily, except Mondays, 10 to 6; Sundays, 1 to 6.)

Japan Society, 333 E. 47th St.—“Souvenirs from Japan,” eighty-five late-nineteenth-century photographs. Through March 22. (Open daily, except Mondays, 11 to 5.)

Morgan Library, 29 E. 36th St.—Seventeenth-century Dutch drawings—of the landscape, genre, and figure variety—by Rembrandt, Ruisdael, Goltzius, and many others. Through April 26.... ¶ A small show of printed books and bindings produced in seventeenth-century Flanders and Holland. Through April 26.... ¶ Selections on view from the library’s permanent collection include one of its three Gutenberg Bibles, Stevenson’s autograph manuscript of “Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde,” and the original scores of symphonies by Brahms and Mahler. Through April 26. (Open Tuesdays through Saturdays, 10:30 to 5; Sundays, 1 to 5.)



Christopher Wilmarth

Museum of American Folk Art, Columbus Ave. at 65th St.—A group of late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century *santos*—carved-wood holy objects made by artisans in Puerto Rico. Through May 10. (Open daily, 11:30 to 7:30.)

National Academy of Design, Fifth Ave. at 89th St.—“Hallowed Haunts,” a show of seventy-three drawings and watercolors by Charles Addams (1912-88), most of which first appeared in the pages of this magazine. Through March 8.... ¶ An exhibition of paintings, drawings, manuscripts, and published works by Samuel F. B. Morse (1791-1872), the founder of the National Academy. Through March 12. (Open Tuesdays, noon to 8, with no admission charge after 5; Wednesdays through Sundays, noon to 5.)

The New Museum, 583 Broadway—“1+1+1,” a series of recent projects by Alfredo Jaar, primarily in the form of large-scale light-box installations. Through April 19.... ¶ “The Big Nothing or Le Presque Rien,” a group exhibition in which each artist has been asked to contemplate the notions of emptiness and materiality. Through April 19.... ¶ Jeffry Mitchell’s installation, titled “My Spirit,” consists of rubber, plaster, and latex tableaux of cartoon figures, toy creatures, and other kitschy icons. Through April 19.... ¶ Walk by the museum’s Broadway window and you may see a museum patron’s face age twenty-five years in thirty seconds. It’s “The Age Machine” that’s doing it, through digital technology. Through April 19. (Open Wednesdays, Thursdays, and Sundays, noon to 6; Fridays and Saturdays, noon to 8.)

New York Public Library, Fifth Ave. at 42nd St.—Recently acquired photographs are on display, including Morris Engel’s panoramic views of New York City and Desiré Charnay’s eighteen-fifties albumen prints of Mexico City. Through May 2. (Third Floor Gallery.) (Open Tuesdays and Wednesdays, 11 to 7:30; Thursdays through Saturdays, 10 to 6.)

Queens Museum of Art, Flushing Meadow Park—Ik-Joong Kang’s “3 x 3,” an installation that consists of thousands of three-inch-square paintings and collages. Through April 12.... ¶ “Art Beyond Sight,” an exhibition of paintings and sculptures by visually impaired artists; museumgoers are permitted to touch the sculptures. Through March 29.... ¶ Cibachrome prints of rearranged newsprint, by Sarah Charlesworth. Through April 12.... ¶ A survey of forty paintings by figurative artists Henrietta Mantooth and Willy Lenski. Through April 12. (Open Tuesdays through Fridays, 10 to 5; Saturdays and Sundays, noon to 5.)

Studio Museum in Harlem, 144 W. 125th St.—“Africa and the Diaspora” features nearly a hundred works from the museum’s collection, dating from the fifth century to the present. (Open Wednesdays through Fridays, 10 to 5; Saturdays and Sundays, 1 to 6.)

GALLERIES—UPTOWN

(Unless otherwise noted, galleries are open Tuesdays through Saturdays from around 10 or 11 to between 5 and 6.)

Gary Hume—A remarkably buoyant first New York solo show of paintings. The style of Hume’s work is abstract-geometric, but his subjects are always concrete. All of the works here depict doors, and they are full of wonderful tonal contrasts—flesh-peach with pinky-pink, for instance, or a bracing array of grays and whites. Through March 14. (Marks, 1018 Madison Ave., at 79th St.)

Short List—**grace hartigan,** Anita Friedman, 980 Madison Ave., at 77th St. (through April 1); **jasper johns,** Gagosian, 980 Madison Ave., at 76th St. (through March 14); **john newman,** Mathes, 851 Madison Ave., at 70th St. (through March 7); **man ray** and **meret oppenheim,** Kent, 47 E. 63rd St. (open Mondays, closed Saturdays, through March 27); **theodore roszak,** Hirschl & Adler, 21 E. 70th St. (through April 11); **robert white,** Graham, 1014 Madison Ave., at 78th St. (through March 28); **christopher wilmarth,** Hirschl & Adler Modern, 851 Madison Ave., at 70th St. (open Mondays, through March 28).

GALLERIES—57TH STREET AREA

Robert Mangold—New paintings by one of the truer, gentler, and more cool-minded celebrants of minimalism. They are more lush and vivid than anything he’s ever done before: gorgeous shades of persimmon, pimiento, porphyry, and celadon in spongy applications. His lines—especially double and single ellipses, but triangles and rectangles as well—seem to whiz across these dappled grounds as if chasing Helios. Through March 14. (Pace, 32 E. 57th St.)

“Surrealism Embodied”—An amusing exhibition of American surrealist paintings and drawings. This is not the semi-abstract surrealism of Gorky, Pollock, and Rothko that gave rise to Abstract Expressionism, but a figurative surrealism, much of it by European-born artists. Some is Picassoesque, and some is Daliesque. There is a requisite Pavel Tchelitchew, a diffuse Dorothea Tanning, and a kitschy early Alfonso Ossorio. By and large, this is a show of well-selected curiosities. Through March 28. (Rosenfeld, 50 W. 57th St.)

“Scandal, Outrage and Censorship: Controversy in Modern Art”—This is an aptly timed exhibition, in that it coincides with the N.E.A.’s recent overturning of a recommended grant to Franklin Furnace because of a videotape of a performance there that included sexual content. There are more parallels than you might think between the Nazis’ condemnation of “degenerate” modern art and recent official attempts to censor controversial art by politicizing its funding. This exhibition makes that abundantly clear, with good wall labels and (mostly minor) drawings and graphic works by such currently revered German Expressionists as Klimt, Nolde, Schiele, Beckmann, Dix, and Jawlensky, most of whom were suppressed by the Nazis. Juxtaposed with these are works by contemporary artists, including Andres Serrano's notorious "Piss Christ," several especially arty Robert Mapplethorpe nudes, a few pungent David Wojnarowiczs, and a deliberately noisy Hans Haacke sculpture of a flag-waving shopping cart that defies one to define patriotism. Through March 7. (Galerie St. Etienne, 24 W. 57th St.)

SHORT LIST—**NICHOLAS AFRICANO** and **MARIANNE EIGENHEER,** Holly Solomon, 724 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. (open Mondays, through March 21); **BROOKS ANDERSON,** Schmidt Bingham, 41 W. 57th St. (open Mondays, through March 21); **LENNART ANDERSON,** Davis & Langdale, 231 E. 60th St. (through March 7); **VIJA CELMINS,** McKee, 745 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. (through April 4); **STEVE CURRIE** and **EMILY MASON,** Borgenicht, 724 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. (through March 14); **DONALD LIPSKI,** Galerie Lelong, 20 W. 57th St. (through April 11); **PAUL MANES,** Marisa del Re, 41 E. 57th St. (through March 7); **ANDRE MASSON,** Zabriskie, 724 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. (through April 11); **ROBERT MOSKOWITZ,** Blum Helman, 20 W. 57th St. (through March 21); **ARNULF RAINER,** Ulysses, 41 E. 57th St. (through March 28); **DOROTHEA ROCKBURNE,** Emmerich, 41 E. 57th St. (through March 21); **HELEN MIRANDA WILSON,** McCoy, 41 E. 57th St. (through March 7).

GALLERIES—SoHo

COLETTE—Since the early seventies, this irrepressible Tunisian-born French artist has explored issues of ego and persona by creating characters, living their lives, killing them off, and memorializing their passing. Usually her nude body is involved. Most of the mixed-media works in this show are new ones based on old images—part of an endless self-cannibalizing process that gets more diluted at each stage. Colette is a whiz with surplus silk and something to wrap it around (especially herself). But when it comes to using a brush, or to employing forms of traditional object-making, both of which she has attempted here, she is pretty feeble. The most appealing work is a portrait of a younger Colette posed, nude, as the Countess Reichenbach with her Count. The large photograph of the pair is enveloped in pouffed shrouds of gathered, gauzy fabric, mostly in pastel colors. What makes this work appealing is that it is both dreamy and sleazy, something magical that also allows its schmattes to hang out. Through March 28. (Rempire, 121 Greene St.)

JOHN FEKNER—In the late seventies, Fekner took to the streets of the South Bronx and the industrial yards of Queens and stencilled such words as "decay," "abandoned," and "last hope" on neglected buildings and rusted automobile carcasses. The resulting works were among the most potent guerrilla public art of the time, notable for their evocative economy. On view is a continuous slide show of these pieces, and it is well worth a look. There are also some of the artist's more recent works—objects made of altered found materials. Though these are along similar politically noble lines, they fail to penetrate the psyche. Through March 7. (Exit Art, 578 Broadway.)

DAN FLAVIN—The three new fluorescent-light works included in this exhibition are extraordinary. Flavin has taken the tired modernist program of exploring the formal elements of art-making and infused into it a new poignancy, creating exciting sculptures through a deceptively simple push-pull of colored light. The works are quite planar, but the light in front of them, behind them, and on their surfaces twists space three-dimensionally, in the manner of the great baroque sculptors. Through March 14. (Pace, 142 Greene St.)

ELLSWORTH KELLY—A group of four works made in the mid-sixties by this proto-minimalist painter, in which two panels are joined at a right angle—one upright, like a painting, and the other horizontal, like a sculpture. It is a fascinating if not entirely satisfactory group. The two works with canvas panels are clearly paintings, while the two painted-metal works, frameless and with an industrial finish, verge on the sculptural. One of the paintings consists of a red vertical panel with a blue stripe on one edge and a green stripe on the other edge, over a base panel of solid yellow. It is an extraordinary, electrifying work. The other three pieces consist of either two colors or one, and while they recall the issues of horizontality which, in the sixties, occupied younger artists such as Carl Andre, they are quite evocative in their tomblike way. What's most exciting about this show is that, in the same way that Kelly took on the challenge of Barnett Newman earlier in his career, during this phase he also challenged himself, turning his own ideas on their side, so to speak, to see what would happen. Through March 28. (Cooper, 155 Wooster St.)

CARTER KUSTERA—Last year, the artist Kevin Carter symbolically killed himself by staging the funeral of his signature, though he left some loose ends. Now he has returned, as Carter Kustera, to tie them up by attempting to destroy the family he left behind. The new works are much less satirical than the Woody Allen-deadpan works related to the funeral—and more haunting. The dysfunctional family meal is portrayed in the form of a table for four, with each place set with its own mini television; Mom's is the monitor for a camera aimed at the table itself, as if she were the head of a high-tech-surveillance squad. (Don't miss the painting of the Virgin made of ice, which hangs on the wall near the dinner piece.) The main gallery contains the sharpest work—a depressed life-size family of four made of wax, jammed onto a wax-covered couch. Four heat lamps will shine on the sculptures for the duration of the exhibition, gradually melting them. The artist intends to box the melted remains afterward and sell them as an edition. Through March 28. (Baer, 476 Broome St.)

SEAN LANDERS—This artist's handwritten stories could have made MOMA's current drawing show more interesting. They are letters to his loan officer, to a bad artist with a bad marketing concept, and to God, and they detail the emotions, neuroses, confessions,

and scams of a struggling artist who is part con man and part poet. Landers is endearing for being utterly sincere about his insincerity. There are also cartoons on view, but these are not as interesting. In the past, Landers has exhibited clay sculptures wrapped in plastic and set on pedestals. Now he has unwrapped them, to reveal small, wet clay heads on poles of such personages as "The Unfortunate Son of an Irish Drunk" and "The Mick." The sculptures are misted three times an hour, and through the forest of heads comes a videotape, for those who choose not to read. Through March 14. (Rosen, 130 Prince St.)

Mila Macek—Good gestural paintings by a Czech-born artist now living in upstate New York. The works bring an attractive and spirited new twist to the old stripe painting—they're reminiscent of Sean Scully; where Scully is monumental, however, Macek is animated. The lipstick-red paintings here are brushed with strokes like pelting rain, and the black ones have edges of yellow shining through, like the sun poking between the slats of venetian blinds. Through March 7. (Ala, 560 Broadway.)

Dennis Oppenheim—Following his superb retrospective at P.S. 1, Oppenheim must be feeling his years. These most recent works are obsessed with the body and its signs of age. There are three large-scale altered organs—a liver with pencils, a heart pierced by paper rolls, and a lung with industrial brushes—that rotate like new models at an auto show. In one sculpture, the artist has perched a somewhat frightening mechanical guard dog inside a mammoth rib cage, but the most gripping work consists of a giant mouth with old-style art books for teeth. The piece seems to accept aging without apology and with only the slightest hint of remorse. Through March 14. (Blum Helman Warehouse, 80 Greene St.)

Erika Rothenberg—This political artist couldn't be more compassionate, yet these multimedia works, which owe a debt to Alexis Smith, never quite succeed in reflecting the strength of her convictions. The one possible exception is an engaging group of fake greeting cards for the abused and neglected. They are penetrating because they take an insipid medium and charge it with the brutally unexpected. The front of one reads "Sorry about the abuse you suffered as a child . . ." above a depiction of a scarred doll; inside, accompanied by a drawing of a daisy, it chillingly continues "Hope you get over it soon!" Through March 14. (P.P.O.W, 532 Broadway.)

Salvatore Scarpitta—Although he is fairly well known for his sculptural reconstructions of a Second World War tank and several functioning race cars, Scarpitta, who since the mid-fifties has been making sculpture that is related to the painting of the Abstract Expressionists, is nevertheless woefully underappreciated. Most of the recent works on view here, which look as if they have been in use for a good fifty years, have skis for bases, or are made of what look like contorted wooden shoe trees. Scarpitta is perhaps the only artist who can make such works without doing so in the shadow of Beuys' sleds. This may be because skis are a metaphor that is pure Scarpitta—a metaphor for transport, fantasy, and work. There are a number of pizza ovens whose meanings are somewhat crushed by their flattened perspective, yet even they have details of pure poetry. And a ski-footed high chair with a bedpan for a helmet is full of associations. Through March 20. (Nosei, 100 Prince St.)

Jeffrey Wisniewski—The artist obtained a suburban house slated for demolition by the State of New York and fed it into a massive chipper. The shredded house—mostly wood, with occasional bits of carpet—is on display in one spread-out heap. Through March 21. (Nordanstad-Skarstedt, 49 Greene St.)

"One Leading to Another"—The 303 Gallery is rarely short on inventive ideas. Adapting an exhibition format from the artist Peter Nadin, the gallery is currently offering a show in which, each week, a new pair of artists will add to what their predecessors have left behind. It began with a work by Andrea Zittel, featuring Lulu, a black rosecomb bantam chicken, who, a sign proclaims, is capable of answering one's most troubling questions with a Ouijan "yes" or "no." Rikrit Tiravanija has added two pots of boiling water and a pile of eggs—which viewers are invited to cook—and a separate audiotaped piece in which the artist attempts to coax Lulu into another pot of cooking water. ("Go ahead. Go ahead. Jump right in.") Things got a little out of hand at the opening, when guests started hurling Tiravanija's eggs at an empty wall—by now the gallery should be quite pungent. Since then, Joyce Pensato has drawn over the yolky drips. On the opposite wall, Allen Ruppersberg has made a few small screenprints in each of which something important is missing—the nine of diamonds' ninth diamond, for example, or, on a map of the U.S., the state of Florida. Buyers beware: Erik Oppenhein (a.k.a. Erik Oppenheim, Dennis's son) will be posted at the front desk on certain days, masquerading as an art consultant. Through March 14. (89 Greene St.)

Short List—**BILL BARRETTE**, Fiction-Nonfiction, 21 Mercer St. (through March 14); **JEAN-MICHEL BASQUIAT** and **J.S.G. BOGGS**, Baghoomian, 555 Broadway (through March 7); **DALE CHIHULY**, Cowles, 420 West Broadway (through March 21); **JOYCE DE GUATEMALA**, 14 Sculptors, 164 Mercer St. (through March 7); **HAMISH FULTON** and **BRUNO JAKOB**, Weber, 142 Greene St. (through March 21); **GIUSEPPE GALLO**, Sperone Westwater, 142 Greene St. (through March 28); **KOMAR & MELAMID**, Feldman, 31 Mercer St. (through March 28); **JOSEPH KONZAL**, Berman-Daferner, 568 Broadway (through March 31); **CLAUDIO MATZKO**, Klagsbrun, 51 Greene St. (through April 4); **GERHARD MERZ**, Gladstone, 99 Greene St. (through March 28); **PIETER LAURENS MOL**, Louver, 130 Prince St. (through March 14); **JOSEPH NECHVATAL**, Brooke Alexander, 59 Wooster St. (through April 4); **BARNETT NEWMAN**, Gagosian, 136 Wooster St. (through March 14); **TIM PRENTICE**, Davidson, 415 West Broadway (through March 7); **PETER SCHUYFF**, Sperone Westwater, 121 Greene St. (through April 4); **MARY ANN UNGER**, Perry, 472 Broome St. (through April 4).

We all remember a simpler time. Phones rang less. Laughter rang true. The world turned slowly. You ran out the door to greet the new day. And all you needed was a friend and a game to make it worthwhile. But maybe the times weren't simpler at all. Maybe all you really need is a place to simplify yourself again.

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Manuel Alvarez Bravo

PHOTOGRAPHY

AFTER we saw "Souvenirs from Japan," at the Japan Society (333 East 47th Street; through March 22), we wanted to prolong that sense of transport which comes with looking at this show, so we sat for a while in the society's open-air garden. It was too chilly to be pleasant, but the exhibition was such a catalyst for the imagination that we didn't lose the feeling it had given us of being in another time and place. If you're interested in either Japan or photography, it would be a terrible loss to miss this display of late-nineteenth-century Japanese photographs, many of them exquisitely hand-colored, from the collection of one R. Schilling, a German forest engineer who worked in Japan at the beginning of the century.

So much can be learned from these photographs that we've pored over the show's catalogue again and again, but we still don't feel satisfied that we've noticed as much as we could. The photographs are so aesthetically pleasing that they could distract us from what they actually depict—be it Shinto shrines, women in Meiji-era Japan, or landscapes. The touches of hand-coloring increase the fairy-tale quality of some of the photographs, such as one showing two men crossing a rustic footbridge; in that photograph, the river below looks more like white silk than water. The initial seductiveness of the pictures may lie in their prettiness, but it's the amount of information they impart which reminds us what a gift to the world photography can be.

Short List—**MANUEL ALVAREZ BRAVO**, Witkin, 415 West Broadway (through April 11); **WILLIAM CHRISTENBERRY** and **VICTOR SCHRAGER**, Pace-MacGill, 32 E. 57th St. (through March 28); **ELLIOTT ERWITT**, Danziger, 415 West Broadway (through March 7); **RAY METZKER** and **WILLIAM EGGLESTON**, Laurence Miller, 138 Spring St. (through April 4); **EADWEARD MUYBRIDGE**, International Center of Photography Midtown, Sixth Ave. at 43rd St. (open daily, except Mondays, 11 to 6, and Tuesday evenings until 8; through April 26); **HIROSHI SUGIMOTO**, Sonnabend, 420 West Broadway (through March 7); **DEBORAH TURBEVILLE**, Staley-Wise, 560 Broadway (through March 7).

MUSIC

A FEW years ago, we unaccountably misplaced our copy of Angel S-37146, a recording of concertos by Witold Lutoslawski and Henri Dutilleux played by Mstislav Rostropovich. When we visited the out-of-print-record shops on West 72nd Street to find another, we learned that we weren't the only one looking. "Goes out the day it comes in," one proprietor told us. Another knew four or five people trying to track it down. We were a little surprised, but we understood why: it's a haunting record. Mr. Rostropovich is one of those musicians for whom new music has never stopped being a part of everyday life. He has inspired, encouraged, or commissioned concertos and other works from composers all the way back to the last years of Prokofiev; about the time we lost the Angel record, the cellist was celebrating his sixtieth birthday with a season of reprises, playing some two dozen of the best pieces written for him over the years. A gift to the future, this—and to other cellists. We haven't made a tally, but we doubt very much whether the violin and the piano, favored over the cello by most composers in the preceding two hundred years, have gained even *one* dozen fine concertos in the period since 1950. Mr. Rostropovich played this music with love; he puts his old-fashioned heart into Dutilleux as into Dvořák. It pleases us very much that younger cellists are learning and loving these pieces. Lynn Harrell is to play the Lutoslawski at Carnegie Hall on March 9; it's good to see evidence, while Mr. Rostropovich is still happily active, that his work will live on after him.

(The box-office number for the Metropolitan Opera House is 362-6000; for Avery Fisher Hall, 875-5030; for Alice Tully Hall, 875-5050; for Carnegie Hall, 247-7800; for Merkin Concert Hall, 129 W. 67th St., 362-8719; for the Miller Theatre, Columbia University, Broadway at 116th St., 854-7799; and for the 92nd Street Y, Lexington Ave. at 92nd St., 415-5440.)

OPERA

Metropolitan Opera—**DON CARLO**, with Aprile Millo, Dolora Zajick, Michael Sylvester, Leo Nucci, and Jan-Hendrik Rootering; conducted by James Levine. (March 2 at 7.). . . With Aprile Millo, Dolora Zajick, Michael Sylvester, Vladimir Chernov, and Samuel Ramey; James Levine. (March 5 and March 11 at 7.). . . **TANNHÄUSER**, with Sharon Sweet, Waltraud Meier, Reiner Goldberg, and Andreas Schmidt; Christof Perick. (March 3 at 7:30.). . . **RIGOLETTO**, with Ruth Ann Swenson, Richard Leech, and Leo Nucci; Nello Santi. (March 4 at 8 and March 7 at 1:30.). . . **LE NOZZE DI FIGARO**, with Kiri Te Kanawa, Dawn Upshaw, Frederica von Stade, Thomas Hampson, and Ferruccio Furlanetto; James Levine. (March 6 and March 10 at 8.). . . With Marilyn Mims, Taro Ichihara, and Giorgio Lormi; Nello Santi. (March 9 at 8.). . . **IL BARBIERE DI SIVIGLIA**, with Erie Mills, Mark Oswald, Michele Farruggia, Renato Capecchi, and Samuel Ramey; Ralf Weikert. (March 7 at 8.) (Metropolitan Opera House.)

"Tania"—An eclectic work in progress, with music by Anthony Davis performed here by six principal singers and a pianist. (St. Ann's Church, 157 Montague St., Brooklyn. 1-718 858-2424. March 6-7 at 8 and March 8 at 3.)

Amato Opera Company—Opening a new production of "La Forza del Destino." (Amato Opera Theatre, 319 Bowery, at 2nd St. 228-8200. March 7 at 8 and March 8 at 2:30.)

ORCHESTRAS AND CHORUSES

New York Philharmonic—André Previn conducts Dvořák's Cello Concerto (featuring Heinrich Schiff) and Mahler's Symphony No. 4 (with soprano June Anderson). (Avery Fisher Hall. March 4-5 and March 7 at 8, March 6 at 2, and March 10 at 7:30.)

Rossini Bicentennial Concert—Roger Norrington conducts the Orchestra of St. Luke's in a celebration of the bicentennial of Rossini's birth (though, inasmuch as the composer was born on leap day, it will be only his forty-ninth birthday). The soloists include sopranos June Anderson and Deborah Voigt, mezzo-sopranos Marilyn Horne and Frederica von Stade, tenors Rockwell Blake and Chris Merritt, baritones Thomas Hampson and Jan Opalach, and bass Samuel Ramey. (Avery Fisher Hall. March 2 at 8.)

Musica Sacra—Richard Westenburg directs the choir and a period-instrument orchestra in sacred works from the Italian Baroque, including Vivaldi's celebrated Gloria. Of special interest is a truncated Mass by Isabella Leonarda, who enjoyed success as both a nun (advancing to the rank of provincial mother superior) and a composer (leaving to posterity more than two hundred compositions in twenty printed collections). (Alice Tully Hall. March 3 at 8.)

Villa-Lobos Orchestra—Alfred Heller conducts Mozart's Symphony No. 40 and Clarinet Concerto (with Andrea Correll), Bach's Second "Brandenburg" Concerto, and seven orchestra-accompanied songs by Villa-Lobos (featuring tenor Marc Heller). (Church of the Heavenly Rest, Fifth Ave. at 90th St. March 4 at 8:45. For information about tickets, call 427-5103.)

"Mozart on Period Instruments"—Fortepianists Malcolm Bilson and Robert Levin perform solo and four-hand works; Mr. Levin improvises "in Mozartean style" on themes submitted by the audience; and each is featured in an early concerto (backed up by the Orchestra of the Old Fairfield Academy, conducted by Thomas Crawford). (Alice Tully Hall. March 5 at 8.)

Oratorio Society of New York—Lyndon Woodside directs Brahms' "Ein Deutsches Requiem"; with soprano Jayne West and baritone Kevin McMillan. (Carnegie Hall. March 7 at 8.)

"Mozart Masses in Concert"—The University of South Carolina Chamber Orchestra and Concert Choir perform Mozart's Missa Brevis in F Major (the "Little Credo," K. 192). The concert also includes, among other works by Mozart, his Violin Concerto No. 4 (K. 218), featuring David Kim. (Alice Tully Hall. March 7 at 8.)

Canticum Novum Singers—Harold Rosenbaum directs music for Lent and Easter by Byrd, Gibbons, Lassus, Poulenc, Messiaen, and others. (St. Peter's Church, Lexington Ave. at 54th St. March 7 at 8. For information about tickets, call 1-914 763-3453.)

New York Chamber Symphony—Mark Elder conducts Tippett's Concerto for Double String Orchestra, Mozart's "Posthorn" Serenade, and Beethoven's Piano Concerto No. 4 (with pianist Alexis Weissenberg). (92nd Street Y. March 7 at 8 and March 8 at 3.)

American Composers Orchestra—Dennis Russell Davies conducts premières of works by Steven Mackey and Julia Wolfe. Also on the program are two New York premières: Olly Wilson's "Sinfonia" and (with Ursula Oppens as soloist) the Piano Concerto No. 3 by Francis Thorne (who was one of the orchestra's founders, in 1976). (Carnegie Hall. March 8 at 3.)

Dawn Upshaw and the Grace Church Choir—The soprano (who was honored with her second Grammy award last week), a chamber group, and the choir (directed by Mary Monroe) perform works by Bach, Mozart, Schubert, and others. A benefit concert. (Grace Church, 254 Hicks St., Brooklyn. March 8 at 3. For information about tickets, call 1-718 624-0111.)

Brandenburg Ensemble—Alexander Schneider conducts music by Mozart, including his Piano Concerto in B-Flat (K. 595, with Rieko Aizawa) and his Clarinet Concerto (with Richard Stoltzman). (Avery Fisher Hall. March 8 at 3.)

ACAFIST—It's a male chamber choir from Moscow, and its fourteen members (directed by A. V. Malutin) will perform Russian works dating from the sixteenth century to the present, including liturgical chants, folk songs, and concert works. (Cathedral of St. John the Divine, Amsterdam Ave. at 112th St. March 8 at 3:30. Admission by contribution.)

Choir of the Brick Church—David Weadon directs choral music by American composers, from the eighteenth-century's William Billings to our century's Ives and Bernstein. (Brick Church, Park Ave. at 91st St. March 8 at 5. No tickets necessary.)

Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra—Jesús López-Cobos conducts Tania León's "Carabalí," Lutoslawski's Cello Concerto (featuring Lynn Harrell), and Tchaikovsky's Symphony No. 4. (Carnegie Hall. March 9 at 8.)

Jupiter Symphony—Jens Nygaard conducts a program that includes works featuring the duo-piano team of Andrew Cooperstock and Richard Dowling: Mozart's Concerto for Two Pianos (K. 365) and Saint-Saëns' "Carnival of the Animals" (in which Martin Bookspan will serve as narrator). (Alice Tully Hall. March 9 at 8.)

Philadelphia Orchestra—Gerard Schwarz conducts Hindemith's "Mathis der Maler" and George Perle's "Dance Fantasy"; pianist Evgeny Kissin is featured in concertos by Mozart (in B-Flat, K. 595) and Shostakovich (his First). (Carnegie Hall. March 10 at 8.)

Hunter Symphony—The orchestra is joined by pianist Vladimir Feltsman for Beethoven's "Emperor" Concerto," in a concert that also includes music by Berlioz and Strauss. Clayton Westermann conducts. (Hunter College Auditorium, 69th St. between Park and Lexington Aves. 772-4448. March 11 at 7.)

New York Concert Singers—Judith Clurman directs, among other works, Arvo Pärt's "Summa" and Magnificat, the première of a piece by Robert Convery, and music by Rossini, Brahms, and Peter Mennin. (Merkin Concert Hall. March 11 at 8.)

RECITALS

Consort of Musicke—Lutenist Anthony Rooley directs six singers from the ensemble (including soprano Emma Kirkby) in music by Monteverdi. (Church of St. Mary the Virgin, 145 W. 46th St. 921-2939. March 2 at 8.)

Brahms Benefit—Clarinettist David Shifrin, pianist Misha Dichter, and the Emerson String Quartet perform an all-Brahms benefit concert. (Alice Tully Hall. March 2 at 8.)

Kalichstein-Laredo-Robinson Trio—Performing trios by Beethoven (the "Ghost") and Tchaikovsky, as well as chamber works by Bach and Debussy. (92nd Street Y. March 3-4 at 8.)

Endellion String Quartet—The foursome plays quartets by Beethoven (in C Major, Op. 59, No. 3) and Haydn (in D Major, Op. 77, No. 2); and clarinettist Daniel McKelway joins them for Mozart's Clarinet Quintet. (Miller Theatre. March 4 at 8.)

Guarneri Quartet—March 4 at 8: Performing the String Quartet No. 2 by the precocious nineteenth-century Spanish composer Juan Arriaga, the New York première of Rorem's Quartet No. 3, and (with violist Ida Kavafian) Dvořák's Quintet in E-Flat. (Alice Tully Hall.). . . ¶ March 7 at 8: Arriaga's Quartet No. 2, Rorem's Quartet No. 3, and Tchaikovsky's D-Major Quartet. (Washington Irving High School, Irving Pl. at 16th St. For information about tickets, call 586-4680.)

Bargemusic—Through its fifteen-year history, Bargemusic has shied away from programming string quartets, feeling that, as the ultimate touchstones of chamber music, they should be reserved for ensembles of long standing. But over the years the Barge's roster has included a number of "regulars" who, by now, have grown intimately familiar with each other's style. This season will therefore include four concerts of string quartets, each featuring seminal works played by a different foursome. The first of these consists of Haydn's D-Major Quartet (Op. 76, No. 5), Janáček's Quartet No. 2, and Beethoven's Quartet No. 16 (his last completed work). (Fulton Ferry Landing, Brooklyn. 1-718 624-4061. March 5 at 7:30 and March 8 at 4.)

Shirley Verrett—The soprano, assisted by pianist Warren George Wilson, performs Schumann's "Frauenliebe und Leben," in addition to works by Handel, Beethoven, Strauss, and Joaquín Nin. (Carnegie Hall. March 5 at 8.)

Boston Camerata—The vocal and instrumental ensemble peers into the genealogy of American folk songs, tracing their ancestry to earlier European "art" and "folk" settings. (Merkin Concert Hall. March 5 at 8.)

Parnassus—The chamber group offers Honegger's Sonatine for cello and piano, as well as New York premières of works by Mario Davidovsky, Henri Dutilleux, Michael Gandolfi, and György Kurtág. (Ethical Culture Society, 2 W. 64th St. March 5 at 8. Tickets at the door on the night of the concert.)

Musicians from Marlboro—Chamber musicians play Beethoven's String Quintet in C Major, Dvořák's Piano Quintet in E-Flat Major, and Brahms' Sextet in G Major. (Metropolitan Museum, Fifth Ave. at 83rd St. 570-3949. March 5 at 8.)

Paula Robison and Friends—The flutist is joined by colleagues for concertos by Vivaldi and the Portuguese Baroque composer Carlos Seixas. (Temple of Dendur, Metropolitan Museum, Fifth Ave. at 83rd St. 570-3949. March 6-7 at 7.)

Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center—Violinist Joshua Bell and cellist Stephen Isserlis join members of the society for a program of Mozart, Schumann, and Bartók. (Alice Tully Hall. March 6 at 8 and March 8 at 5.)

New York Chamber Ensemble—Stephen Rogers Radcliffe leads the group in an all-American program of works by Emma Lou Diemer, Lou Harrison, George Rochberg, Howard Swanson, and Edward Knight (the première of his Clarinet Concerto, featuring Alan R. Kay as soloist). (Florence Gould Hall, 55 E. 59th St. 355-6160. March 6 at 8.)

Amsterdam Schoenberg Ensemble—Reinbert de Leeuw conducts the group in Debussy's "Prélude à l'Après-midi d'un Faune"; songs by Zemlinsky, Berg, and Busoni (with soprano Rosemary Hardy); and Schoenberg's "Pierrot Lunaire" (featuring vocalist Barbara Sukowa). (Merkin Concert Hall. March 7 at 8.),

Italian Guitarfest—Six Italian classical guitarists perform solo and chamber music (on period instruments) by nineteenth-century Italian composers. Not just the obvious composers, either, like Paganini, Mauro Giuliani, and Ferdinando Carulli; this concert also spotlights the likes of Filippo Gragnani, Luigi Legnani, and M. A. Zani de Ferranti. (Only one transalpine composition will interlope: a "Hungarian Fantasy" by the nineteenth-century Viennese guitarist Joseph Kasper Mertz.) (Weill Recital Hall, at Carnegie Hall. March 7 at 8:30.)

New Concert Hall—Aaron Copland may have been a Brooklyn boy, but his name is most impressively memorialized in Queens. The Aaron Copland School of Music of Queens College has completed a new five-hundred-seat concert hall, which incorporates a four-division, eighteenth-century-style tracker-action organ by Gene Bedient. The hall's inaugural, all-Copland concert will feature baritone Thomas Hampson, violinist Daniel Phillips, cellist Stephen Kates, oboist Ronald Roseman, organist Donald Joyce, and numerous other musicians. (Queens College, Flushing. 1-718 793-8080. March 8 at 2.)

Scott Brubaker—French hornist, performing works by Schubert, Britten, Ravel, and others; with assisting artists. (Weill Recital Hall. March 8 at 2.)

Gervase de Peyer and David Buechner—The clarinettist and the pianist perform original works and transcriptions, including sonatas by Schubert, Brahms, and Poulenc. (Lafayette Avenue Presbyterian Church, 85 S. Oxford St., Brooklyn. March 8 at 3. Tickets at the door on the day of the concert.)

Turnpike Camerata—Presenting, among other chamber works, two new pieces: Lisa Bielawa's "Tag!" (a setting of children's schoolyard rhymes) and Edward Harsh's "According to Passion" (a setting of a collage of quotations about passion). (Christ and St. Stephen's Church, 120 W. 69th St. March 8 at 3. Admission by contribution.)

John Tyson—Recorder player, performing music ancient and modern (but nothing Baroque), as well as Renaissance-style improvisations. Jacqueline Schwab assists on piano and virginals. (Advent Lutheran Church, Broadway at 93rd St. March 8 at 3. For information about tickets, call 580-7234.)

Pomerium Musices—The vocal ensemble, specialists in medieval and Renaissance music, presents a-cappella works from the early years of polyphony, including twelfth- and thirteenth-century organa by the great Parisian masters Leonin and Perotin, anonymous fourteenth-century English works, and fifteenth-century motets and mass movements by Busnois and Ockeghem. Alexander Blachly directs. (Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church, 164 W. 100th St. March 8 at 5. Admission by contribution.)

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MUSIC–Cont'd

Ton Koopman—The Dutch harpsichordist includes in his program works by Bach, Antoine Forqueray, and Jacques Duphly. (Frick Collection, 1 E. 70th St. 288-0700. March 8 at 5.)

Raimundas Katilius—The Lithuanian violinist plays (among other works) music by his countrymen Osvaldas Balakauskas and Julius Andrejevas, as well as a suite by Philip Ramey (known in these parts as the New York Philharmonic's program annotator.) (Weill Recital Hall. March 8 at 5:30.)

Alexander String Quartet—The ensemble plays quartets by Honegger and Jean Perrin; pianist James Tocco joins them for Schumann's Quintet in E-Flat and the première of a quintet by Arthur Weisberg. (Merkin Concert Hall. March 9 at 8.)

Josef Suk and Zuzana Růžičková—The Czech violinist and harpsichordist perform sonatas by Bach, Handel, Mozart, and Viktor Kalabis. (Merkin Concert Hall. March 10 at 2.)

Russell Sherman—The Boston-based pianist, who enjoys what approaches a cult following in his home city (a guru among Brahmins, one might say), performs Mozart's Fantasy (K. 396), Liszt's "Reminiscences de Don Juan," the second book of Debussy's Preludes, and the Sonata No. 1 of Roger Sessions. (Miller Theatre. March 10 at 8.)

Jacquelyn Helin—Piano transcriptions of Bach (as arranged by Busoni and Myra Hess) and Copland's "El Salón México" (as arranged by Bernstein) share the bill with works by Chopin, Schumann, Ravel, and Yehudi Wyner. (92nd Street Y. March 10 at 8.)

N. Y. U. Chamber Music Society—Presenting new music from Israel. (Merkin Concert Hall. March 10 at 8.)

Maurizio Pollini—*The pianist performs* Schubert's Sonata in B-Flat Major (D. 960) and Chopin's twelve Études (Op. 10). (Carnegie Hall. March 11 at 8.)

Alexander Shtarkman—The pianist (who by failing to win a medal at the most recent Van Cliburn piano competition qualified to be spotlighted in the Y's "Goldfingers" series) performs Schubert's C-Major Sonata (D. 840), Ravel's "Valses Nobles et Sentimentales," and both books of Brahms' "Paganini Variations." (92nd Street Y. March 11 at 8.)

Tallis Scholars—The vocal chamber ensemble, directed by Peter Phillips, presents Renaissance music from Iberia and the Hispanic Empire, including a complete performance of Victoria's Missa Gaudeamus. (Church of St. Mary the Virgin, 145 W. 46th St. 921-2939. March 11 at 8.)

André Emelianoff—Cellist, performing works by Ginastera, George Perle, Ernst Toch, Alfred Schnittke, and Gerald Levinson (the première of his "Dreamlight," written for Mr. Emelianoff). (Miller Theatre. March 11 at 8.)

JAZZ/POP/ROCK
PERSONAL APPEARANCES

Jean Redpath—This grande dame of Scottish folksinging describes her repertoire as "a brew of pure flavor and pure emotion" and attributes her success to "dumb luck and happy accidents." Both assertions ring true. Her Highland renditions are in a class by themselves; and, as for her career, who could have predicted that a medieval-studies major from Edinburgh University would become both a Member of the Order of the British Empire and a Kentucky Colonel? (Miller Theatre, Columbia University, Broadway at 116th St. 854-7799. March 7 at 8.)

U2—It's a little more than a week into the "Achtung Baby" juggernaut, and U2, packing some of their best work, will be firing up the Nassau Coliseum next. Bono, Adam, Larry, and the Edge have played together for over a decade now, and their songs, from "I Will Follow" through "Mysterious Ways," have maintained a convincing, almost spiritual harmony with each other. When captured live, U2's evocative, subterranean sound, driven by the Edge's brilliant, phantasmagoric guitar work, travels to the shimmering, wide-open spaces of boys at play. It's a sound that is practically landscaped for an arena. On "Achtung Baby," Bono, always an inspirational shouter, has found a different voice, and this tour may showcase a more subtle and tender delivery from him than fans expect. A followup to the release of an exciting new record, this show is guaranteed to be one of the few you-had-to-be-there concerts of the year. (Nassau Coliseum. 1-516 794-9300. March 9 at 8.)

Johnny Mathis and Dionne Warwick—Radio City Music Hall, Sixth Ave. at 50th St. 247-4777. March 11-14 at 8.

Thomas Buckner—Merkin Concert Hall, 129 W. 67th St. 362-8719. March 4 at 8.

Diedre Murray and Fred Hopkins—With Andy Bey, Elliott Sharp, Gerry Hemingway, and Newman Baker. (Miller Theatre. March 6 at 8.)

Bulgarian State Radio and Television Female Vocal Choir—Avery Fisher Hall. 875-5030. March 6 at 8.

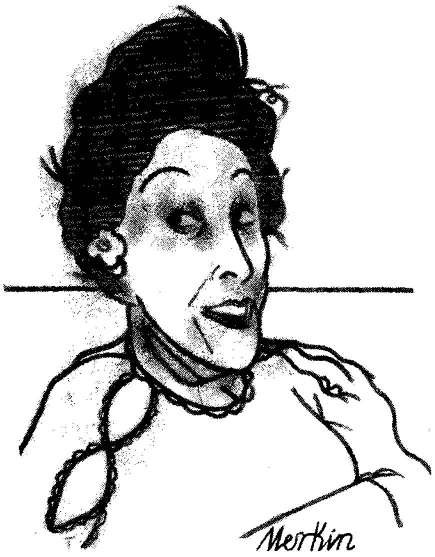
"A Great Night for the Irish"—*Frank Patterson* and three hundred singers and dancers. (Radio City Music Hall. March 7 at 8.)

"New Sounds"—Presenting Morton Subotnick, Joan La Barbara, and Gary Lucas. (Merkin Concert Hall. March 8 at 3.)

Allman Brothers Band—Beacon Theatre, Broadway at 74th St. 496-7070. March 10-11 at 8. Through March 22.

Grateful Dead—Nassau Coliseum. March 11-13 at 7:30.

"Cabariety"—March 3-8: *Baby Jane Dexter*, Richard Ianni, Tom Andersen, K.T. Sullivan, Wayne Hosford, and Wes McAfee. . . . ¶ March 10-15: Annie Hughes, Amy Ryder, Bill Wright, the Tonics, the Cassidys (March 10-12 only), and Jason Robert Brown. (Theatre at St. Peter's Church, Lexington Ave. at 54th St. 688-7253. Shows Tuesdays through Fridays at 8; Saturdays at 2 and 8; and Sundays at 3 and 7. Through March 29.)



Adelaide Hall at Carnegie Hall

Carnegie Hall Cabaret—March 4-5: Adelaide Hall. . . . ¶ March 6: Bill Daugherty and Robin Field. . . . ¶ March 11-12: Julie Wilson. (Weill Recital Hall, at Carnegie Hall. 247-7800. Concerts at 8.)

SPORTS

The Knicks have been playing extremely well, so it's no surprise to learn that eleven games have sold out so far this season—three more than in all of last year. Fans who don't plan ahead may find themselves at the mercy of the ticket agents working the street corners across from Madison Square Garden—especially for a big game, such as the recent one against the indomitable Chicago Bulls.

The night of the game, we noticed a heavy police presence outside the Garden, and the scalpers—never a friendly bunch anyway—appeared even more skittish than usual. When we tried to find out what was up, we were ignored, threatened, and shoved aside. "I'll give you forty seconds," one glowering man said, "then I want you gone." Security was tight, he said, because "some counterfeits were sold here a couple of weeks ago, and now they're cracking down. It's been a long winter, and we hoped to make some bucks tonight. It's bullshit. Shakespeare couldn't have said it better himself." Still, we witnessed plenty of deals being struck, and our forty-second interlocutor felt pretty confident that he could get $250 for a courtside seat.

The police will probably have backed off by the time the Lakers come in, on March 10. According to our source, last-minute ticket buyers can expect to pay in the neighborhood of $200 for a seat close to the action and $60 for one in the stratosphere.

HOME TEAMS

Rangers—Vs. the Devils, March 4. . . . ¶ Vs. the Washington Capitals, March 9. . . . ¶ Vs. the Chicago Black Hawks, March 11. (Game time, 7:30.)

Islanders—Vs. the Montreal Canadiens, March 3. . . . ¶ Vs. the Philadelphia Flyers, March 10. (Game time, 7:35.)

Devils—Vs. the Rangers, March 2 at 7:35.

Knicks—Vs. the Dallas Mavericks, March 3 at 7:30. . . . ¶ Vs. the Los Angeles Clippers, March 5 at 7:30. . . . ¶ Vs. the Charlotte Hornets, March 7 at 7:30. . . . ¶ Vs. the Los Angeles Lakers, March 10 at 8.

Nets—Away until March 17, when they face the Chicago Bulls.

(The Rangers and the Knicks play at Madison Square Garden, 465-6000; the Islanders at the Nassau Coliseum, 1-516 794-9300; and the Devils and the Nets at the Meadowlands Arena, 1-201 935-3900.)

RACING

Horses—At Aqueduct: Daily, except Tuesdays, at 12:30. . . . **Trotting** at Yonkers Raceway: Weeknights at 8 and Tuesdays at 1. . . . At the Meadowlands: Weeknights at 7:30.

ABOVE AND BEYOND

Cat Show—Fifteen rings full of cat owners and their felines, plus sideshows: lectures on cat nutrition, psychology, and grooming; booths that sell food and toys for cats; and a computer that will match you with a compatible feline breed. Best-in-show will be chosen Sunday evening, at around 6. (Madison Square Garden. 465-6000. March 6, from 3 to 10, March 7-8, from 9 to 6.)

At the Gardens—On March 8, from 10 to 4, the people at the New York Botanical Garden will sponsor a maple-sugar day; participants are invited to taste sap. For more information, call 220-8777. . . . ¶ Also on March 8, at 1, the folks at the Brooklyn Botanic Garden will give a tour-cum-lecture on Biblical plants, including date palms, olive trees, and pomegranates. For more information, call 1-718 622-4433.

Talks—March 5 at 8: Benjamin Bradlee, Stephen Carter, Judith Krug, Arthur Miller, John Powell, and Morley Safer talk about First Amendment rights. (Tishman Auditorium, Vanderbilt Hall, New York University, 40 Washington Square S., at Macdougal St. No tickets necessary.). . . ¶ March 7 at 1: Various dancers (from the Twyla Tharp company, the American Ballet Theatre, and the Lar Lubovitch company, among others) talk about dancers' bodies and whether pain is necessary. (Woodpeckers Tap Dance Center, 170 Mercer St. For information about tickets, call 1-718 875-3502.)

Readings—March 5 at 8: Miguel Algarin, Russell Banks, Jayne Cortez, Jessica Hagedorn, Josephine Gattuso Hendin, and Ishmael Reed all read from their own works. (Universalist Church, 160 Central Park W., at 76th St. For information about tickets, call 875-4128.). . . ¶ March 9 at 8: Kathryn Walker and others read from the works of Joyce Carol Oates. (Manhattan Theatre Club, at City Center, 131 W. 55th St. For information about tickets, call 645-0905.). . . ¶ March 10 at 7: Nina Cassian, Judith Ortiz Cofer, and William Logan read from their own works. (Poetry Society of America, National Arts Club, 15 Gramercy Park S. Tickets at the door on the night of the reading.)

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GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN

THE MOVIE HOUSES

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FILMS ACCOMPANIED BY A DAGGER ARE DESCRIBED IN THE "IN BRIEF" SECTION, STARTING ON PAGE 20.

EAST SIDE

Angelika Film Center, 18 W. Houston St. (995-2000)

Theatre 1: "Black Robe" (†).

Theatre 2: "Amazon" (directed by Mika Kaurismaki), with Robert Davi, Rae Dawn Chong, and Kari Väänänen.

Theatre 3: "Mississippi Masala" (Mira Nair), with Denzel Washington and Sarita Choudhury.

Theatre 4: "Where Angels Fear to Tread" (Charles Sturridge), with Helena Bonham Carter, Judy Davis, and Rupert Graves.

Theatre 5: "Until the End of the World" (Wim Wenders), with William Hurt.

Theatre 6: "My Own Private Idaho" (Gus Van Sant), with River Phoenix and Keanu Reeves.

Public Theatre, 425 Lafayette St. (598-7171)

Through March 5: A program of short films by young black filmmakers; and "Paloma" (1974, Daniel Schmid), with Ingrid Caven, Peter Kern, and Bulle Ogier.

March 6-8: "Shadow of Angels" (1976, Schmid), with Caven and Rainer Werner Fassbinder; and "Violanta" (1977, Schmid), with Lucia Bose, Maria Schneider, Lou Castel, Craven, and Gérard Depardieu.

March 9: Theatre closed.

From March 10: "Shadow of Angels"; and "Tonight or Never" (1972, Schmid).

Movieland 8th Street Triplex, 36 E. 8th. (477-6600)

Theatre 1: "Final Analysis" (Phil Joanou), with Richard Gere and Kim Basinger.

Theatre 2: "Gate II" (Michael Nankin).

Theatre 3: "Naked Lunch" (†).

Loews Village Theatre VII, 3rd Ave. at 11th. (982-0400)

Theatre 1: "JFK" (†).

Theatre 2: "Radio Flyer" (Richard Donner), with Lorraine Bracco, Elijah Wood, Joseph Mazzello, and Adam Baldwin.

Theatre 3: "Wayne's World" (†).

Theatre 4: "The Prince of Tides" (†).

Theatre 5: "Bugsy" (†).

Theatre 6: Through March 5: "Wayne's World" (†). From March 6: "Gladiator" (Rowdy Herrington), with James Marshall, Cuba Gooding, Jr., Brian Dennehy, Robert Loggia, and Ossie Davis.

Theatre 7: "Memoirs of an Invisible Man" (John Carpenter), with Chevy Chase.

Village East Cinemas, 2nd Ave. at 12th. (529-6799)

Theatre 1: "The Hand That Rocks the Cradle" (†).

Theatre 2: (Matinées only) "The Adventures of the Great Mouse Detective," a Disney animated film; and (evenings only) "The Fisher King" (†).

Theatre 3: "Medicine Man" (†).

Theatre 4: Through March 5: "Daughters of the Dust" (1991, Julie Dash). From March 6: "Blame It on the Bellboy" (Mark Herman), with Dudley Moore, Bryan Brown, Richard Griffiths, and Bronson Pinchot.

Theatre 5: "Hear My Song" (†).

Theatre 6: "Beauty and the Beast" (†).

Theatre 7: "Paris Is Burning" (Jennie Livingston), a documentary; and "Antonia and Jane" (Beeban Kidron).

Loews 19th Street East 6, B'way at 19th. (260-8000)

Theatre 1: "Hook" (†).

Theatre 2: "Juice" (Ernest R. Dickerson).

Theatre 3: "Boyz N the Hood" (†).

Theatre 4: "Meeting Venus" (István Szabó), with Glenn Close and Niels Arestrup.

Theatre 5: "Gate II" (Michael Nankin).

Theatre 6: "Final Analysis" (Phil Joanou), with Richard Gere and Kim Basinger.

Gramercy, Lexington at 23rd. (475-1660)

"Father of the Bride" (Charles Shyer), with Steve Martin.

Bay Cinema, 2nd Ave. at 32nd. (679-0160)

"Shining Through" (David Seltzer), with Michael Douglas and Melanie Griffith.

Murray Hill Cinemas, 160 E. 34th. (689-6548)

Theatre 1: Through March 5: "The Hand That Rocks the Cradle" (†). From March 6: "Once Upon a Crime" (Eugene Levy), with John Candy, James Belushi, Cybill Shepherd, Sean Young, Richard Lewis, Ornella Muti, Giancarlo Giannini, and George Hamilton.

Theatre 2: "Medicine Man" (†).

Theatre 3: Through March 5: "Beauty and the Beast" (†). From March 6: "Blame It on the Bellboy" (Mark Herman), with Dudley Moore, Bryan Brown, Richard Griffiths, Bronson Pinchot, and Andreas Katsulas.

Theatre 4: "Bugsy" (†).

Loews 34th Street Showplace, 238 E. 34th. (532-5544)

Theatre 1: "Wayne's World" (†).

Theatre 2: "Radio Flyer" (Richard Donner), with Lorraine Bracco, Elijah Wood, Joseph Mazzello, and Adam Baldwin.

Theatre 3: "Final Analysis" (Phil Joanou), with Richard Gere and Kim Basinger.

34th St. East, 241 E. 34th. (683-0255)

"Stop! or My Mom Will Shoot" (Roger Spottiswoode), with Sylvester Stallone.

Eastside Cinema, 3rd Ave. at 55th. (755-3020)

"The Fisher King" (†).

Sutton I and 2, 3rd Ave. at 57th. (759-1411)

Theatre 1: "Father of the Bride" (Charles Shyer), with Steve Martin.

Theatre 2: Through March 5: (Matinées only) "The Adventures of the Great Mouse Detective," a Disney animated film; and (evenings only) "Hearts of Darkness: A Filmmaker's Apocalypse" (Fax Bahr and George Hickenlooper), a documentary about the making of "Apocalypse Now." From March 6: "Blame It on the Bellboy" (Mark Herman), with Dudley Moore, Bryan Brown, Richard Griffiths, and Bronson Pinchot.

Gotham Cinema, 3rd Ave. at 58th. (759-2262)

"Grand Canyon" (†).

Plaza, 42 E. 58th. (355-3320)

"Where Angels Fear to Tread" (Charles Sturridge), with Helena Bonham Carter, Judy Davis, and Rupert Graves.

Manhattan Twin, 3rd Ave. at 59th. (935-6420)

Theatre 1: Through March 5: "Gate II" (Michael Nankin). From March 6: "Gladiator" (Rowdy Herrington), with James Marshall, Cuba Gooding, Jr., Brian Dennehy, Robert Loggia, and Ossie Davis.

Theatre 2: "Hook" (†).

59th Street East Cinema, 239 E. 59th. (759-4630)

"For the Boys" (†).

Baronet and Coronet, 3rd Ave. at 59th. (355-1663)

Theatre 1: "Fried Green Tomatoes" (†).

Theatre 2: "This Is My Life" (†).

Cinema I, Cinema II, and Cinema 3rd Avenue, 3rd Ave. at 60th. (753-6022)

Theatre 1: "Beauty and the Beast" (†).

Theatre 2: Through March 5: "Medicine Man" (†). From March 6: "Othello" (1952, Orson Welles), with Welles.

Theatre 3: "The Hand That Rocks the Cradle" (†).

First & 62nd Cinemas, 400 E. 62nd. (752-4600)

Theatre 1: "Shining Through" (David Seltzer), with Michael Douglas and Melanie Griffith.

Theatre 2: "Falling from Grace" (John Mellencamp), with Mellencamp.

Theatre 3: Through March 5: "Radio Flyer" (Richard Donner), with Lorraine Bracco, John Heard, Elijah Wood, Joseph Mazzello, and Adam Baldwin. From March 6: "The Lawnmover Man" (Brett Leonard), with Jeff Fahey and Pierce Brosnan.

Theatre 4: "Memoirs of an Invisible Man" (John Carpenter), with Chevy Chase.

Theatre 5: "Naked Lunch" (†).

Theatre 6: Through March 5: "Stop! or My Mom Will Shoot" (Roger Spottiswoode), with Sylvester Stallone. From March 6: "Once Upon a Crime" (Eugene Levy), with John Candy, James Belushi, Cybill Shepherd, Sean Young, Richard Lewis, Ornella Muti, Giancarlo Giannini, and George Hamilton.

Gemini I and 2, 2nd Ave. at 64th. (832-1670)

Theatre 1: "Bugsy" (†).

Theatre 2: "Final Analysis" (Phil Joanou), with Richard Gere and Kim Basinger.

Beekman, 2nd Ave. at 66th. (737-2622)

"Under Suspicion" (Simon Moore), with Liam Neeson and Laura San Giacomo.

Loews New York Twin, 2nd Ave. at 67th. (744-7339)

Theatre 1: "Wayne's World" (†).

Theatre 2: "The Mambo Kings" (Arne Glimcher), with Armand Assante, Antonio Banderas, and Cathy Moriarty.

68th St. Playhouse, 3rd Ave. at 68th. (734-0302)

"Hear My Song" (†).

Loews Tower East, 3rd Ave. at 71st. (879-1313)

"JFK" (†).

U. A. East, 1st Ave. at 85th. (249-5100)

Through March 5: "Gate II" (Michael Nankin).

From March 6: "Once Upon a Crime" (Eugene Levy), with John Candy.

Park & 86th Street Cinemas, 125 E. 86th. (534-1880)

Theatre 1: Through March 5: "Shining Through" (David Seltzer), with Michael Douglas and Melanie Griffith. From March 6: "The Lawnmover Man" (Brett Leonard), with Jeff Fahey and Pierce Brosnan.

Theatre 2: "Stop! or My Mom Will Shoot" (Roger Spottiswoode), with Sylvester Stallone, Estelle Getty, and JoBeth Williams.

Loews Orpheum VII, 3rd Ave. at 86th. (876-2400)

Theatre 1: (Matinées only) "The Adventures of the Great Mouse Detective," a Disney animated film; and (evenings only) "The Prince of Tides" (†).

Theatre 2: "Wayne's World" (†).

Theatre 3: "Memoirs of an Invisible Man" (John Carpenter), with Chevy Chase.

Theatre 4: "Mississippi Masala" (Mira Nair), with Denzel Washington and Sarita Choudhury.

Theatre 5: "Bugsy" (†).

Theatre 6: "Radio Flyer" (Richard Donner), with Lorraine Bracco, John Heard, Elijah Wood, Joseph Mazzello, and Adam Baldwin.

Theatre 7: Through March 5: "Final Analysis" (Phil Joanou), with Richard Gere and Kim Basinger. From March 6: "Gladiator" (Rowdy Herrington), with James Marshall, Cuba Gooding, Jr., Brian Dennehy, Robert Loggia, and Ossie Davis.

86th Street East Twin, 3rd Ave. at 86th. (249-1144)

Theatre 1: Through March 5: (Matinées only) "Beauty and the Beast" (†); and (evenings only) "Medicine Man" (†). From March 6: "Blame It on the Bellboy" (Mark Herman), with Dudley Moore, Bryan Brown, Richard Griffiths, and Bronson Pinchot.

Theatre 2: "The Hand That Rocks the Cradle" (†).

WEST SIDE

Film Forum, 209 W. Houston St. (727-8110)

Theatre 1: Through March 3: "Step Across the Border" (1990, directed by Nicolas Humbert and Werner Penzel). From March 4: "Titicut Follies" (†).

Theatre 2: See listings under Revival Houses.

Theatre 3: "35 Up" (Michael Apted), a documentary.

Waverly I and 2, 6th Ave. at 3rd. (929-8037)

Theatre 1: "Shining Through" (David Seltzer), with Michael Douglas and Melanie Griffith.

Theatre 2: "Fried Green Tomatoes" (†).

Art Greenwich Twin, Greenwich Ave. at 12th. (929-3350)

Theatre 1: Through March 5: "Stop! or My Mom Will Shoot" (Roger Spottiswoode), with Sylvester Stallone. From March 6: "Once Upon a Crime" (Eugene Levy), with John Candy, James Belushi, Cybill Shepherd, Sean Young, Richard Lewis, Ornella Muti, and George Hamilton.

Theatre 2: "Grand Canyon" (†).

Quad Cinema, 34 W. 13th. (255-8800)

Theatre 1: Through March 5: "Close My Eyes" (Stephen Poliakoff), with Alan Rickman, Saskia Reeves, and Clive Owens. From March 6: "Winter in Lisbon" (Angel Amigo, in French), with Dizzy Gillespie.

Theatre 2: "Europa Europa" (Agnieszka Holland, in German and Russian).

Theatre 3: "Life Is Sweet" (Mike Leigh).

Theatre 4: Through March 5: "Paper Mask" (Christopher Morahan). From March 6: "En Toute Innocence" (Alain Jessua; in French), with Nathalie Baye and Michel Serrault.

Chelsea Cinemas, 260 W. 23rd. (691-4744)

Theatre 1: "Medicine Man" (†).

Theatre 2: "Grand Canyon" (†).

Theatre 3: "Fried Green Tomatoes" (†).

Theatre 4: Through March 5: "Shining Through" (David Seltzer), with Michael Douglas and Melanie Griffith. From March 6: "Blame It on the Bellboy" (Mark Herman), with Dudley Moore, Bryan Brown, Richard Griffiths, and Bronson Pinchot.

Theatre 5: "Wayne's World" (†).

Theatre 6: Through March 5: "Stop! or My Mom Will Shoot" (Roger Spottiswoode), with Sylvester Stallone. From March 6: "Gladiator" (Rowdy Herrington), with James Marshall, Cuba Gooding, Jr., Brian Dennehy, Robert Loggia, and Ossie Davis.

Theatre 7: "Memoirs of an Invisible Man" (John Carpenter), with Chevy Chase, Daryl Hannah, and Sam Neill.

Theatre 8: Through March 5: "Fried Green Tomatoes" (†). From March 6: "The Lawnmover Man" (Brett Leonard), with Jeff Fahey and Pierce Brosnan.

Theatre 9: Through March 5: "The Hand That Rocks the Cradle" (†). From March 6: "Once Upon a Crime" (Eugene Levy), with John Candy, James Belushi, Cybill Shepherd, Sean Young, Richard Lewis, Ornella Muti, Giancarlo Giannini, and George Hamilton.

23rd St. West Triplex, 333 W. 23rd. (989-0060)

Theatre 1: "Radio Flyer" (Richard Donner), with Lorraine Bracco, John Heard, Elijah Wood, Joseph Mazzello, and Adam Baldwin.

Theatre 2: "Bugsy" (†).

Theatre 3: (Matinées only) "Beauty and the Beast" (†); and (evenings only) "The Prince of Tides" (†).

Guild, 33 W. 50th. (757-2406)

"Beauty and the Beast" (†).

Worldwide Cinemas, 50th St. between 8th and 9th Aves. (246-1583)

Theatre 1: "Boyz N the Hood" (†).

Theatre 2: "Cape Fear" (Martin Scorsese), with Robert De Niro, Nick Nolte, and Jessica Lange.

Theatre 3: "Secret Friends" (Dennis Potter), with Alan Bates, Gina Bellman, and Frances Barber.

Theatre 4: "The Prince of Tides" (†).

Theatre 5: "The Black Robe" (†).

Theatre 6: "Hearts of Darkness: A Filmmaker's Apocalypse" (Fax Bahr and George Hickenlooper), a documentary about the making of "Apocalypse Now."

Ziegfeld, 141 W. 54th. (765-7600)

Through March 5: "Radio Flyer" (Richard Donner), with Lorraine Bracco, Elijah Wood, Joseph Mazzello, and Adam Baldwin.

From March 6: "The Lawnmover Man" (Brett Leonard), with Jeff Fahey and Pierce Brosnan.

Loews Festival, 6 W. 57th. (307-7856)

"The Prince of Tides" (†).

57th St. Playhouse, 110 W. 57th. (581-7360)

"Naked Lunch" (†).

Carnegie Hall Cinemas, 7th Ave. between 56th and 57th. (265-2520)

Theatre 1: "Mississippi Masala" (Mira Nair), with Denzel Washington and Sarita Choudhury.

Theatre 2: "Madame Bovary" (Claude Chabrol; in French), with Isabelle Huppert.

Loews Fine Arts, 4 W. 58th. (980-5656)

"Kafka" (Steven Soderbergh), with Jeremy Irons.

Cinema 3, 2 W. 59th. (752-5959)

"Meeting Venus" (István Szabó), with Glenn Close and Niels Arestrup.

Loews Columbus Circle, B'way at 61st. (247-5070)

"JFK" (†).

62nd & Broadway, 62 W. 62nd. (265-7466)

"Grand Canyon" (†).

Lincoln Plaza 1, 2, and 3, B'way at 63rd. (757-2280)

Theatre 1: "Voyager" (Volker Schlöndorff), with Sam Shepard and Julie Delpy.

Theatre 2: Through March 5: "High Heels" (Pedro Almodóvar; in Spanish). From March 6: "Toto le Heros" (Jaco Van Dormael; in French), with Michel Bouquet.

Theatre 3: "The Double Life of Véronique" (Krzysztof Kieslowski, in French and Polish), with Irène Jacob and Philippe Volter.

Regency, B'way at 67th. (724-3700)

"Fried Green Tomatoes" (†).

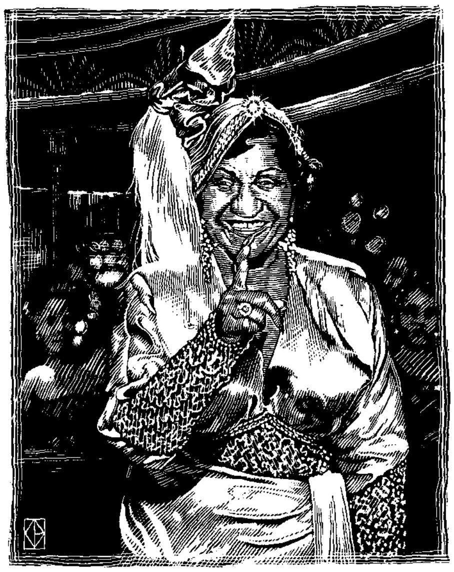
Loews 84th Street Sixplex, B'way at 84th. (877-3600)

Theatre 1: "Wayne's World" (†).

Theatre 2: "Memoirs of an Invisible Man" (John Carpenter), with Chevy Chase.

Theatre 3: "The Mambo Kings" (Arne Glimcher), with Armand Assante, Antonio Banderas, and Cathy Moriarty.

Theatre 4: Through March 5: "Radio Flyer" (Richard Donner), with Lorraine Bracco, John Heard, Elijah Wood, Joseph Mazzello, and Adam Baldwin. From March 6: "Gladiator" (Rowdy Herrington), with James Marshall, Cuba Gooding, Jr., Brian Dennehy, Robert Loggia, and Ossie Davis.



Celia Cruz in "The Mambo Kings"

Theatre 5: "Medicine Man" (†).

Theatre 6: Through March 5: "Final Analysis" (Phil Joanou), with Richard Gere and Kim Basinger. From March 6: "Blame It on the Bellboy" (Mark Herman), with Dudley Moore, Bryan Brown, Richard Griffiths, and Bronson Pinchot.

Metro Cinema 1 and 2, B'way at 99th. (222-1200)

Theatre 1: Through March 5: (Matinées only) "The Adventures of the Great Mouse Detective," a Disney animated film; and (evenings only) "The Prince of Tides" (†). From March 6: "The Lawnmover Man" (Brett Leonard), with Jeff Fahey and Pierce Brosnan.

Theatre 2: Through March 5: "Stop! or My Mom Will Shoot" (Roger Spottiswoode), with Sylvester Stallone. From March 6: "Once Upon a Crime" (Eugene Levy), with John Candy.

Olympia I and II, B'way at 107th. (865-8128)

Theatre 1: "Gate II" (Michael Nankin).

Theatre 2: "The Hand That Rocks the Cradle" (†).

TIMES SQUARE AREA

Criterion Center, B'way at 44th. (354-0900)

Theatre 1: "Hook" (†).

Theatre 2: "Gate II" (directed by Michael Nankin).

Theatre 3: "Bugsy" (†).

Theatre 4: "Final Analysis" (Phil Joanou), with Richard Gere and Kim Basinger.

Theatre 5: "Memoirs of an Invisible Man" (John Carpenter), with Chevy Chase.

Theatre 6: "The Last Boy Scout" (Tony Scott), with Bruce Willis and Damon Wayans.

Theatre 7: "Gate II."

Embassy 1, B'way at 46th. (302-0494)

"The Hand That Rocks the Cradle" (†).

Embassy 2, 3, and 4, 7th Ave. at 47th. (730-7262)

Theatre 1: "Medicine Man" (†).

Theatre 2: "Juice" (Ernest R. Dickerson), with Omar Epps.

Theatre 3: Through March 5: (Matinées only) "The Adventures of the Great Mouse Detective," a Disney animated film; and (evenings only) "Father of the Bride" (Charles Shyer), with Steve Martin. From March 6: "Blame It on the Bellboy" (Mark Herman), with Dudley Moore, Bryan Brown, Richard Griffiths, and Bronson Pinchot.

Loews Astor Plaza, 44th St. at B'way. (869-8340)

"Wayne's World" (†).

National Twin, B'way at 44th. (869-0950)

Theatre 1: "Shining Through" (David Seltzer), with Michael Douglas and Melanie Griffith.

Theatre 2: Through March 5: "Stop! or My Mom Will Shoot" (Roger Spottiswoode), with Sylvester Stallone, Estelle Getty, and JoBeth Williams. From March 6: "Gladiator" (Rowdy Herrington), with James Marshall, Cuba Gooding, Jr., Brian Dennehy, Robert Loggia, and Ossie Davis.

REVIVAL HOUSES

Le Cinematographe, 15 Vandam St. (675-4680)

"Secret Friends" (1992, directed by Dennis Potter), with Alan Bates, Gina Bellman, and Frances Barber

8th St. Playhouse, 52 W. 8th. (674-6515)

Through March 3: "Full Moon in Paris" (1984, Eric Rohmer; in French); and "Summer" (1986, Rohmer; in French).

March 4-5: "A Month in the Country" (1988, Pat O'Connor), with Colin Firth, Kenneth Branagh, Patrick Malahide, and Natasha Richardson; and "Life and Nothing But" (1990, Bertrand Tavernier; in French).

March 6-7: "Devil in the Flesh" (1987, Marco Bellocchio; in Italian); and "Henry IV" (1985, Bellocchio; in Italian), with Marcello Mastroianni, Claudia Cardinale, and Paolo Bonacelli.

March 8-9: "Au Revoir les Enfants" (1987, Louis Malle; in French), with Gaspard Manesse, Raphaël Fejtö, Francine Racette, and François Négret; and "Murmur of the Heart" (†).

March 10: "Dim Sum: A Little Bit of Heart" (1985, Wayne Wang); and "A Great Wall" (1986, Peter Wang; in English and Mandarin), with Wang.

March 11: "Came a Hot Friday" (1985, Ian Mune); and "Where the Green Ants Dream" (1985, Werner Herzog), with Bruce Spence.

Film Forum 2, 209 W. Houston St. (727-8110)

Through March 5: "Andrei Roublev" (1969, Andrei Tarkovsky; in Russian).

March 6-7: "The Younger Generation" (1929, Frank Capra), with Lina Basquette and Ricardo Cortez; and "The Jazz Singer" (1927, Alan Crosland), with Al Jolson and May McAvoy.

March 8-9: "Gentleman's Agreement" (1947, Elia Kazan), with Gregory Peck, Dorothy McGuire, and John Garfield; and "Crossfire" (see page 23).

March 9 at 8: "Humoresque" (1946, Jean Negulesco), with Joan Crawford and John Garfield.

March 10: "Counsellor-at-Law" (†); and "The Kibitzer" (1929, Edward Sloman).

March 11: "Symphony of Six Million" (1935, Gregory La Cava), with Irene Dunne and Ricardo Cortez; and "None Shall Escape" (1944, André de Toth), with Marsha Hunt and Alexander Knox.

Theatre 80 St. Marks, 80 St. Marks Pl. (254-7400)

March 2: "Masculine Feminine" (1965, Jean-Luc Godard; in French), with Jean-Pierre Léaud and Chantal Goya; and "A Married Woman" (1965, Godard; in French).

March 3: "The Spy Who Came In from the Cold" (1965, Martin Ritt), with Richard Burton, Claire Bloom, and Oskar Werner; and "The Man Who Never Was" (1956, Ronald Neame), with Clifton Webb, Gloria Grahame, and Robert Flemyng.

March 4: "Blazing Saddles" (1974, Mel Brooks), with Cleavon Little, Gene Wilder, and Madeline Kahn; and "Silent Movie" (1976, Brooks), with Brooks, Marty Feldman, Dom DeLuise, and Sid Caesar.

March 5: "The Wrong Man" (1956, Alfred Hitchcock), with Henry Fonda, Vera Miles, and Anthony Quayle; and "Dial M for Murder" (1954, Hitchcock), with Ray Milland, Grace Kelly, Robert Cummings, Anthony Dawson, and John Williams.

March 6-7: "Gone with the Wind" (1939, Victor Fleming), with Vivien Leigh and Clark Gable.

March 8: "Lolita" (1962, Stanley Kubrick), with Sue Lyon, James Mason, Peter Sellers, and Shelley Winters; and "Killer's Kiss" (1955, Kubrick), with Frank Silvera.

March 9: "Band of Outsiders" (1964, Jean-Luc Godard; in French), with Anna Karina, Sami Frey, and Charles Brasseur; and "Breathless" (1959, Godard; in French), with Jean Seberg and Jean-Paul Belmondo.

March 10: "Kiss Me Deadly" (1955, Robert Aldrich), with Ralph Meeker and Albert Dekker; and "The Big Knife" (1955, Aldrich), with Jack Palance, Ida Lupino, Shelley Winters, Wendell Corey, Jean Hagen, and Rod Steiger.

March 11: "The Day of the Locust" (1975, John Schlesinger), with Donald Sutherland, Karen Black, Burgess Meredith, William Atherton, Geraldine Page, and Billy Barty; and "The Last Tycoon" (†).

FILM LIBRARIES, ETC.

Museum of Modern Art, Roy and Niuta Titus Theatres, 11 W. 53rd St. (708-9490)—March 2 at 2:30 and March 3 at 6: "Souls for Sale"

MOVIE HOUSES—Cont'd

(1923, directed by Rupert Hughes; silent), with Eleanor Boardman and Richard Dix. . . . ¶ March 2 at 3: "One Simple Story" (1958, Marcel Hanoun; in French). . . . ¶ March 2 at 6: A program of four short films by Tony De Nonno. . . . ¶ March 2 at 6: "Le Corbeau" ("The Raven"; 1943, Henri-Georges Clouzot; in French), with Pierre Fresnay. . . . ¶ March 3 at 2:30: "César" (1936, Marcel Pagnol; in French), with Raimu, Pierre Fresnay, Orane Démazis, and Charpin. . . . ¶ March 3 at 3 and 6: "Clearcut" (1991, Richard Bugajski). . . . ¶ March 5 at 2:30 and 6, March 6 at 3 and 6, and March 7-8 at 2:30 and 5: Academy Award-nominated feature-length documentaries. . . . ¶ March 5 at 3 and 6: "Talk 16" (1991, Janis Lundman and Adrienne Mitchell), a documentary. . . . ¶ March 6 at 2:30: "Henry IV" (1985, Marco Bellocchio; in Italian), with Marcello Mastroianni, Claudia Cardinale, and Paolo Bonacelli. . . . ¶ March 6 at 6 and March 7 at 2: "Act of Sorrow" (1990, Pasquale Squitieri; in Italian), with Claudia Cardinale, Bruno Cremer, and Karl Zinny. . . . ¶ March 7 at 5 and March 8 at 2: "The Amusements of Private Life" (1990, Cristina Comencini; in Italian), with Delphine Forest, Christophe Malavoy, and Giancarlo Giannini. . . . ¶ March 8 at 5: "Beirut" (1991, Maroun Bagdadi; in French). . . . ¶ March 9-10 at 2:30 and 6: Academy Award-nominated foreign language films.

WALTER READE THEATRE, Lincoln Center, 165 W. 65th St., plaza level. (875-5600)—March 2 at 2 and 8:45 and March 3 at 4:15 and 9:15: "French Cancan" (1954, Jean Renoir; in French), with Jean Gabin, Maria Felix, and Edith Piaf. . . . ¶ March 2 at 4: "Thieves Like Us" (1974, Robert Altman), with Keith Carradine, Shelley Duvall, John Schuck, and Bert Remsen. . . . ¶ March 2 at 6:30: "Pennies from Heaven" (1981, Herbert Ross), with Steve Martin and Bernadette Peters. . . . ¶ March 3 at 2 and 6:30 and March 6 at 4:45 and 6:45: "Dirty as an Angel" (1991, Catherine Breillat; in French). . . . ¶ March 4 at 2 and 6:30 and March 8 at 6, 8, and 10: "I Don't Hear the Guitar Anymore" (1991, Philippe Garrel; in French). . . . ¶ March 4 at 4 and 9 and March 6 at 2 and 9: "Lola Montès" (†). . . . ¶ March 5 at 2 and 6:45 and March 7 at 4:45 and 8:30: "A Beating Heart" (1991, Francois Dupeyron; in French), with Catherine Deneuve and Gérard Depardieu. . . . ¶ March 5 at 4 and 9:15 and March 7 at 2: "Paris Belongs to Us" (1960, Jacques Rivette; in French), with Betty Schneider. . . . ¶ March 7 at 6:45 and 10:30, March 9 at 4, and March 10 at 2 and 6: "Numero Deux" (1975, Jean-Luc Godard; in French). . . . ¶ March 8 at 2 and March 9-10 at 8: "The Mother and the Whore" (†). . . . ¶ March 9 at 2 and 6 and March 10 at 4: "Lola" (1961, Jacques Demy; in French), with Anouk Aimée and Marc Michel.

MUSEUM OF TELEVISION AND RADIO, 25 W. 52nd St. (621-6800)—A Dennis Potter retrospective. March 5 at 5:30, March 6 at 6, and March 7 at 2:30: "Paper Roses" (1971, Granada), with Bill Maynard; and "Where the Buffalo Roam" (1966, BBC), with Hywel Bennett and Megs Jenkins. . . . ¶ March 8 at 2:30: "Blue Remembered Hills" (1979, BBC), with Helen Mirren, Colin Welland, Robin Ellis, and Michael Elphick; and "Cream in My Coffee" (1980, London Weekend Television).

AMERICAN MUSEUM OF THE MOVING IMAGE, 35th Ave. at 36th St., Astoria. (1-718 784-0077)—"Masters of Cinematography: A Vittorio Storaro Retrospective." March 7 at 2: "The Spider's Stratagem" (†). . . . ¶ March 7 at 4:30: "The Conformist" (1970, Bernardo Bertolucci; in Italian), with Jean-Louis Trintignant, Stefania Sandrelli, and Dominique Sanda. . . . ¶ March 8 at 2: "Last Tango in Paris" (1972, Bertolucci; in French and English), with Marlon Brando and Maria Schneider. . . . ¶ March 8 at 5: "Luna" (1979, Bertolucci), with Jill Clayburgh and Matthew Barry.

FLORENCE GOULD HALL, 55 E. 59th St. (355-6160)—March 11 at 12:30, 3:15, 6, and 8:45: "Vincent & Theo" (1990, Robert Altman), with Tim Roth and Paul Rhys.

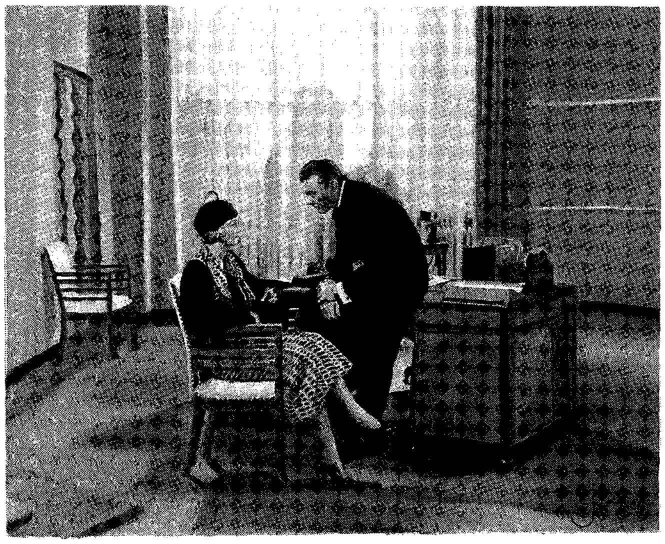
SYMPHONY SPACE, B'way at 95th St. (864-5400)—March 9 at 6:30: "Fellini Satyricon" (1970, Federico Fellini; in Italian). . . . ¶ March 9 at 9: "Fellini's Roma" (1972, Fellini; in Italian).

ASIA HOUSE, Park Ave. at 70th St. (517-2742)—Films by Zhang Yimou, cinematographer. March 6 at 6: "The Big Parade" (1985, Chen Kaige; in Mandarin). . . . ¶ March 6 at 8:30: "Yellow Earth" (1984, Chen Kaige; in Mandarin).

WHITNEY MUSEUM, Madison Ave. at 75th St. (570-0537)—"The Local Stigmatic" (1992, David Wheeler), with Al Pacino, Paul Guilfoyle, and Joe Maher. Showings Wednesdays and Fridays through Sundays at 1 and 3 and Thursdays at 2, 4, and 6:30.

IN BRIEF

SEE ABOVE FOR THEATRE ADDRESSES AND TELEPHONE NUMBERS.
IF A MOVIE HAS BEEN REVIEWED IN "THE CURRENT CINEMA" DURING THE PAST TWO YEARS, THE DATE OF ITS REVIEW IS GIVEN.



Doris Kenyon and John Barrymore in "Counsellor-at-Law"

(The following notes are by Pauline Kael, Terrence Rafferty, and Michael Sragow.)

BEAUTY AND THE BEAST—It's got storytelling vigor and clarity, bright, eclectic animation, and a frisky musical wit. In this Disney version of the fairy tale, Belle (the voice of Paige O'Hara) is a book-reading French provincial girl—a virtuous sort of Mademoiselle Bovary. She dreams of a Prince Charming but gets more than she bargains for when she becomes hostage to the buffalolike Beast (the surprisingly orotund Robby Benson). Underneath his fang-gnashing glower, he's a prisoner of adolescence—unlike Peter Pan, he wants to grow up. He's the opposite of Belle's lunkheaded village suitor, Gaston (Richard White), a narcissistic macho man. Throughout, the Howard Ashman–Alan Menken score is clever and fluid in the best Lerner and Loewe manner, with flashes of oddball humor that keep everything light and bouncy. (Gaston's theme song trumps "C'est Moi," from "Camelot.") There's a great cast of supporting utensils at the Beast's enchanted castle, led by Jerry Orbach in an ebullient vocal turn as the Chevalier-like candleholder, Lumiere. David Ogden Stiers is Cogsworth, the mantel clock; Angela Lansbury is Mrs. Potts, the teapot; and Jo Anne Worley is the Wardrobe. There isn't anything particularly haunting, and not all the script's variations are fresh. But this is easily the zippiest Disney cartoon feature in the thirty years since "101 Dalmatians." Gary Trousdale and Kirk Wise directed the screenplay by Linda Woolverton.—M.S. (Village East Cinemas, Cinema I, and Guild. . . . ¶ 23rd St. West Triplex. Matinées only. . . . ¶ Murray Hill Cinemas; through March 5. . . . ¶ 86th Street East Twin; through March 5, evenings only.)

BLACK ROBE—An unusual and absorbing new film about North American Indians and a French Jesuit missionary in the early seventeenth century. It's a culture-clash drama in which the most important conflicts take place in the realm of the spirit. The main characters are an excruciatingly pious young priest called Father Laforgue (Lothaire Bluteau) and an Algonquian chief named Chomina (August Schellenberg). Their world views are so radically opposed that at times the two men seem unable to acknowledge each other as human. The screenwriter, Brian Moore, and the director, Bruce Beresford, show extraordinary respect for the stubborn, almost impenetrable otherness of their historical characters. The film is an adventure story in the truest sense: the filmmakers lead us into unknown territory, and keep pushing us farther and farther on, until, by the end, we find ourselves deep in the wilderness of the seventeenth-century consciousness. Bluteau's performance is enervated, but the script is superbly intelligent, the direction is confident, and Schellenberg's Chomina is magnificent. The picture moves on a steady, powerful flow of ideas and emotions, and it stirs in us a sense of discovery. Based on Moore's 1985 novel of the same name. Also with Aden Young, Sandrine Holt, and Tantoo Cardinal. Cinematography by Peter James.—T.R. (Reviewed in our issue of 11/18/91.) (Angelika Film Center, and Worldwide Cinemas.)

BOYZ N THE HOOD—The writer and director, John Singleton, is a twenty-three-year-old graduate of the U.S.C. film school. This movie, his first, is a classically constructed—and therefore rather predictable—coming-of-age drama about young black men growing up on the mean streets of south central Los Angeles. The picture conveys a vivid sense of the dangers, both physical and emotional, of day-to-day existence in this ravaged urban environment. Even the quietest domestic scenes are charged with a kind of battlefront tension: there's always the ominous metronomic beat of police helicopters in the background, and sudden sputters of gunfire seem to intrude on every moment of calm or reflection. Singleton's evocation of real people's struggles to find some measure of peace and sanity in these grim urban circumstances is heartfelt and often moving, and the movie provides a welcome corrective to the dehumanizing sensationalism of the local-news version of inner-city life. But the young filmmaker's professionalism and precocious self-assurance sometimes work against his best instinct. Singleton's plot is disappointingly conventional; it obeys screenwriting-class rules. The experience he's dealing with here deserves something more than the tidy dramatic structure that he has imposed on it. We get glimpses of what the movie might have been in the complex, magnetic performance of Ice Cube, a rap star (formerly of N.W.A.), who plays a neighborhood gangster type named Doughboy. Also with Cuba Gooding, Jr., Larry Fishburne, Nia Long, Tyra Ferrell, and Angela Bassett.—T.R. (Loews 19th Street East 6, and Worldwide Cinemas.)

BUGSY—This opulent period gangster movie, written by James Toback and directed by Barry Levinson, is largely a showcase for the old-fashioned star magnetism of Warren Beatty, who plays the legendary Benjamin (Bugsy) Siegel. The screenplay portrays Bugsy as a charming, mercurial psychopath with a rather touching taste for glamour; it concentrates on the last few years of the hero's life, when he became a Hollywood celebrity and built the first hotel-casino in Las Vegas. He's a vivid, unpredictable, one-of-a-kind guy, and the filmmakers seem to realize that they can't take their eyes off him for a second. Siegel is a fascinating monster; we don't want to take our eyes off him, either. This is a rich role for Beatty, and he tears into it hungrily. It's the best kind of star performance: Beatty seems entirely himself, but in a new way. He's ferociously, mesmerizingly funny. Annette Bening plays Bugsy's lover, the tough, wily, independent-minded mob courtesan Virginia Hill, and she more than holds her own in her scenes with the star. And the movie is filled with pungent, memorable supporting performances. Ben Kingsley brings a surprisingly dry, elegant sense of comic timing to his portrait of sober Meyer Lansky (one of the hero's partners in the New York mob). Harvey Keitel, as Mickey Cohen, Bugsy's right-hand man in Los Angeles, spits out his profane lines as if they were live firecrackers. Elliott Gould plays the tiny role of Harry Greenberg, an aging, flabby mob schlemiel, and he's absolutely inspired; he plays this dazed character as a Willy Loman who has wandered too far from the old territory. Despite its lavish surface, this is essentially a movie of small, lovingly crafted pleasures. It's smart, swanky fun.—T.R. (12/30/91) (Loews Village Theatre VII, Murray Hill Cinemas, Gemini, Loews Orpheum VII, 23rd Street East Triplex, and Criterion Center.)

Counsellor-at-Law (1933)—John Barrymore seems an unlikely choice for the ghetto-born lawyer of Elmer Rice's play, but this is one of the few screen roles that reveal his measure as an actor. His "presence" is apparent in every scene; so are his restraint, his humor, and his zest. The material is success-story-with-heartbreak—a typical American well-made play of the period: energetic, naïve, melodramatic, good-hearted, and full of gold-diggers, social climbers, and dedicated radicals. The director, William Wyler, sticks close to the play and tells the story in a simple, unadorned way, which has the advantage for us now of preserving the theatrical style of the time. With Bebe Daniels, Melvyn Douglas, Doris Kenyon, Mayo Methot, Thelma Todd, Onslow Stevens, Isabel Jewell, John Qualen, Vincent Sherman, and, as the horrid stepson, Richard Quine. The adaptation is by Rice; cinematography by Norbert Brodine.—P.K. (Film Forum 2; March 10.)

The Fisher King—This hundred-and-thirty-seven-minute endurance test is the story of a former New York City "shock jock" (Jeff Bridges) who befriends a schizoid former medievalist (Robin Williams) and joins his quest for the Holy Grail. The gonzo filigree of the director, Terry Gilliam, surrounds this fable of redemption with pseudo-originality. The allusion-mongering of the writer, Richard LaGravenese, gives it delusions of grandeur. At heart, the film is no different from a whole string of Hollywood movies centering on mysterious madmen who may be legendary heroes. As usual for this drippy kind of film, Williams' throwback character, Parry—short for Parsifal—is supposed to inspire everybody with his virtuous whimsies. But Gilliam doesn't know how to give the fantasy any sentimental charm, and he's hell on the actors, including Mercedes Ruehl as Bridges' earthy lover and Amanda Plummer as Williams' gawky amorous ideal. They mug; Gilliam takes mug shots. The movie is a peculiarly irritating failure—a leaden piece of uplift.—M.S. (Eastside Cinemas. . . . ¶ Village East Cinemas. Evenings only.)

For the Boys—Bette Midler plays Dixie Leonard, a singer-dancer-comedienne who becomes famous in the early days of the Second World War, when she teams up with an established star named Eddie Sparks (James Caan, who gives the movie's best performance). Framed by an award ceremony at which Dixie and Eddie are to be honored for their many years of entertaining troops on U.S.O. tours, the story is told in a series of flashbacks. Most of the big sequences take place in wartime: in London and North Africa during the Second World War; in Korea in the early fifties; in Vietnam in 1969. This structure allows Midler to perform musical numbers from different eras and to attempt the acting tour de force of playing a character at several distinct stages of life. She piles persona on top of persona on top of persona for two and a half hours in an effort to overwhelm us with the sheer force and infinite variety of herself: she is the world. In the Second World War sequences, the picture has a certain trashy charm, but the Korea and Vietnam scenes feature "realistic" combat footage and glib antiwar sentiments. Bette Midler begins as a red-hot mama and winds up as Mother Courage.

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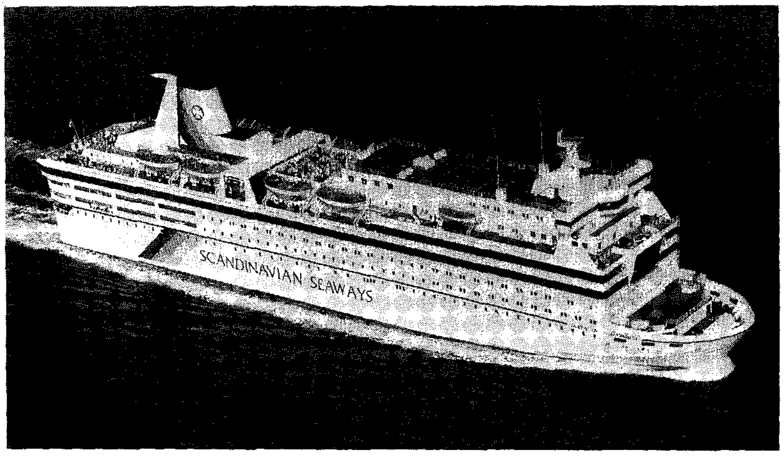

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And this vanity production is such an ordeal that it turns into a demonstration of a startling thesis: war is bad, but entertainment is hell. Also with George Segal, Christopher Rydell, and Arye Gross. Directed by Mark Rydell, from a screenplay by Marshall Brickman, Neal Jimenez, and Lindy Laub.—T.R. (12/16/91) (59th Street East Cinema.)

Fried Green Tomatoes—Cancer, wife-beating, burning crosses, barbecue, fat-lady jokes at the expense of Kathy Bates, wisdom dispensed by Jessica Tandy, and female bonding that stops just shy of lesbianism. That's the recipe for this clunky, fraudulent, yet apparently crowd-pleasing laugh- and tear-jerker. In the framing story, Tandy befriends Bates and inspires her with the Depression-era tale of tomboy Idgie (Mary Stuart Masterson) and pretty, demure Ruth (Mary-Louise Parker), who discover happiness when they found the Whistle Stop Café in Idgie's small Alabama home town. The director, Jon Avnet, drenches the palate with sweet sauce, then goes for the throat. The only good white males are run over by a train; in this feminist wish fulfillment, it isn't only tomatoes that get sliced. Written by Fannie Flagg (who has a bit role), Carol Sobieski, and, uncredited, Avnet, from Flagg's novel "Fried Green Tomatoes at the Whistle Stop Café."—M.S. (Baronet, Waverly, Chelsea Cinemas, and Regency.)

Grand Canyon—Or, the self-importance of being earnest. Kevin Kline plays an L.A. immigration lawyer who lives as comfortably as a hot entertainment lawyer; Danny Glover plays the tow-truck driver who rescues Kline when his car conks out in a rough black section of the city. Kline plots to repay his savior by moving Glover's sister to a better neighborhood and fixing Glover up with Alfre Woodard. Meanwhile, Kline's wife (Mary McDonnell) surges with maternal ardor when she finds a babe in the shrubbery. The director, Lawrence Kasdan, who co-wrote the script with his wife, Meg, pretends to confront the chaos of contemporary urban life: free-floating anger and violence, racial abrasions, the fragility of family bonds. But he keeps breaking the characters' falls with mystical whoopee cushions—a blend of enriched-white-bread comedy and New Age uplift. By the end of the movie, Kline can do no wrong; even the secretary he once slept with (Mary-Louise Parker) lands on her feet. "Grand Canyon" is a liberal soap opera: it manufactures biodegradable suds. Steve Martin provides a few tart moments as a producer of violent action films, but Kasdan punishes the character by shooting him in the thigh.—M.S. (Gotham Cinema, Art Greenwich Twin, Chelsea Cinemas, and 62nd & Broadway.)

The Hand That Rocks the Cradle—This vengeful-nanny thriller has a catchy ad campaign: "Trust is her weapon. Innocence her opportunity. Revenge her only desire." The filmmakers, too, go after the trusting and innocent, but their desire is to make a killing at the box office. The twenty-eight-year-old screenwriter, Amanda Silver, spells out everything as if for the intelligence-impaired. Annabella Sciorra plays Claire, a devoted wife, mother, and, yes, botanist who blows the whistle on a lascivious gynecologist, catalyzing his suicide. Rebecca De Mornay is Peyton, the bad doctor's widow, who loses her own child and lies her way into Claire's nursery. And Ernie Hudson is the heroic, mentally challenged handyman who is wise with children: his name, of course, is Solomon. (Claire's husband, Michael, played by Matt McCoy, is a nonentity.) With its banal, docile household threatened by an enemy within, the film is like "The Stepfather" without wit or irony. De Mornay's Peyton gets off one campy verbal swipe at Solomon that's sure to be a favorite at high-school study halls, but Julianne Moore, as Michael's first love and Claire's friend, gives the performance of the movie. She's coiled and out there, like an exposed spring. She's also funny; she makes spikiness likable. Curtis Hanson directed, impersonally.—M.S. (Village East Cinemas, Cinema 3rd Avenue, 86th Street East Twin, Olympia, and Embassy 1. . . . ¶ Murray Hill Cinemas, and Chelsea Cinemas; through March 5.)

Hear My Song—With Ned Beatty, Adrian Dunbar, and Tara Fitzgerald; directed by Peter Chelsom. (Reviewed in this issue. (Village East Cinemas, and 68th St. Playhouse.)

Hook—Steven Spielberg's film means to give a contemporary spin to J. M. Barrie's classic "Peter Pan." The movie is a failure in almost every way, but it's unmistakably of our time: its lack of conviction and its panicky eagerness to please are depressingly up-to-the-minute. The script, by Jim V. Hart and Malia Scotch Marmo, presents Peter Pan as a grown-up American family man named Peter Banning (Robin Williams). Banning, a yuppie corporate lawyer, has no idea that he was ever Peter Pan, and he's so wrapped up in making money that he neglects his wife and kids. The movie contrives to send him back to Neverland, where he rediscovers his former identity and does battle with his old nemesis, Captain Hook (Dustin Hoffman). The filmmakers use up their energy and our patience in scattershot attempts to appeal to every conceivable audience. The whole sorry spectacle turns out to be a kind of self-help fairy tale, an illustrated lecture on finding the inner child. The picture is full of special-effects "magic," but the tricks feel strained; we're constantly aware of the anxiety and the backbreaking effort it's taking to produce them, and that's no kind of magic at all. The movie seems drenched in flop sweat. In this version of "Peter Pan," the imagination feels like a burden—a terrible, crushing obligation. Also with Maggie Smith, Julia Roberts, Bob Hoskins, Dante Basco, Caroline Goodall, Charlie Korsmo, and Amber Scott. The running time is two hours and fifteen minutes.—T.R. (12/30/91) (Loews 19th Street East 6, Manhattan Twin, and Criterion Center.)

At Theatre 80 St. Marks, Ida Lupino and Jack Palance in "The Big Knife"

JFK—Oliver Stone's movie means to demonstrate that the assassination of John F. Kennedy was not the act of a disturbed Marxist loner named Lee Harvey Oswald but the result of a vast, complex right-wing conspiracy. The screenplay, by Stone and Zachary Sklar, packs an extraordinary amount of assassination lore into three hours and eight minutes; it also includes a ton of speculative material about governmental misconduct, and quite a few invented characters. The movie is a thick gumbo of truths, half-truths, unverifiable hypotheses, and pure rant, and Stone ladles it out indiscriminately. In essence, the conspiracy theory argued here amounts to a series of inferential leaps proceeding from a speculation (that J.F.K. was killed because he wanted to pull out of Vietnam and end the Cold War). It's all bombast and misdirection, like a courtroom summation by a lawyer who knows that he can't win on the evidence. Stone comes on like a fearless radical, but his attitude toward the audience is firmly in the Hollywood tradition: he tries to bypass the intellect and go straight for the gut. The picture plays like an endless episode of "America's Most Wanted." Its hysterical manner and its slipshod handling of the facts actually have the effect of diminishing the credibility of the case for conspiracy. The clearest sounds we hear in this movie are those of Oliver Stone shooting himself in the foot. With Kevin Costner as New Orleans District Attorney Jim Garrison, Sissy Spacek as his wife, Gary Oldman as Oswald, and an all-star cast of witnesses and conspirators: Tommy Lee Jones, Joe Pesci (an abominable performance), Donald Sutherland, Kevin Bacon, Jack Lemmon, Ed Asner, John Candy, Walter Matthau. Garrison himself does a brief turn as Chief Justice Warren.—T.R. (1/13/92) (Loews Village Theatre VII, Loews Tower East, and Loews Columbus Circle.)

The Last Tycoon (1976)—Harold Pinter adapted Fitzgerald's unfinished novel about Hollywood, and Elia Kazan directed the picture, which was produced by Sam Spiegel and stars Robert De Niro as the artist-businessman Monroe Stahr. The result is so enervated that it's like a vampire movie after the vampires have left. De Niro gives an authentic interpretation of a New York-Jewish Hollywood intellectual giant of the thirties, but he might be acting under a blanket. He stands around waiting while Ingrid Boulting, who plays Kathleen, loiters over inane remarks. (Of all Fitzgerald's implausible heroines, Kathleen—the runaway mistress of a European king—is the most vaporous.) Probably the first mistake was to approach the book cap in hand, and the next was to hire Pinter; the film needed a writer who would fill in what's missing—Pinter's art is the art of taking away. With Jack Nicholson, Robert Mitchum, Jeanne Moreau, Ray Milland, Donald Pleasence, Theresa Russell, Dana Andrews, and Tony Curtis—the only one who shows any vitality.—P.K. (Theatre 80 St. Marks; March 11.)

Lola Montès (1955)—This ambitious, phantasmagorical treatment of the scandalous life of the nineteenth-century courtesan and dancer Lola Montès is a reflection on the ephemeral nature of fame, beauty, and pleasure. It was the last film completed by Max Ophuls; as he lay dying, his producers were shortening and re-editing his version (it was cut from 140 minutes to 110 to 90) in the hope of recouping their investment, which had been large. (The film was shot in CinemaScope and color and was made on an opulent scale.) But even in a restored form, it's disappointing—poorly acted and too shallow for its melancholy tone and its rich décor and elaborate structure. Lola (Martine Carol), far past her prime, is seen being exhibited and humiliated in a circus in New Orleans; the ringmaster—Peter Ustinov—tells the audience that it will see Lola's life story, and her early conquests and adventures are shown in flashbacks. Regrettably, Martine Carol couldn't manage to look young enough for Lola's radiant early days, and she was too bad a dancer even to play a bad dancer—she was a nondancer. There is nothing unusual about her Lola—nothing that would explain why men are going mad over her. The center of the movie seems to be missing, and this isn't just the fault of the actress. The swirling, rococo camera movement at the circus is surprisingly elegant (though presumably the circus is meant to be tawdry). The movement suggests that this rather dumpy little woman has had an extraordinary emotional life, yet nothing seems to happen in those flashbacks—which don't gain in depth from our knowing what Lola has come down to. And she loiters so long with the king in Bavaria that one wants to give her carriage a push. What makes this folly so poignant and so painful to watch is that its virtuoso director didn't allow himself any middle ground: the film had to be his greatest masterpiece to be any good at all. According to his script girl, he died knowing he had failed. (The film was also one of the worst box-office disasters of its era.) With Anton Walbrook as King Ludwig I, Oskar Werner, Ivan Desny, and Will Quadflieg as Liszt. Ophuls and three others worked on the shockingly empty script, adapted from a French best-seller by Cecil St. Laurent. Sets by Jean d'Eaubonne and Willy Schatz; costumes by Georges Annekov; cinematography by Christian Matras; music by Georges Auric. In French.—P.K. (Walter Reade Theatre; March 4 and 6.)

Medicine Man—Sean Connery, in the title role of a botanist/biochemist who discovers a cure for cancer in the Amazon rain forest, plays the kind of droll grizzly who calls his helper/boss (Lorraine Bracco) Bronx even though she says she comes from Brooklyn. Doubtless Connery could come up with some appropriate one-syllable nicknames for this dead mass of a movie. He provides the only hint of amusement with his seemingly effortless and virile charm. Bracco lets all the perspiration show—and in the jungle that's a ton of sweat. Written by Tom Schulman ("Dead Poets Society") and Sally Robinson, from an original story by Schulman, the film is meant to be message entertainment. But any info it has to offer falls between the wisecracks, and as fun it fizzles. The director, John McTiernan, lets the audience get too far ahead of the protagonists. Viewers yell out the missing ingredient to the cancer cure long before Connery and Bracco cry eureka.—M.S. (Village East Cinemas, Murray Hill Cinemas, Chelsea Cinemas, Loews 84th Street Sixplex, and Embassy. . . . ¶ Cinema II; through March 5. . . . ¶ 86th Street East Twin; through March 5, evenings only.)

The Mother and the Whore (1973)—This controversial three-hour-and-thirty-minute film, produced, written, and directed by Jean Eustache, is about the aging young of the Left Bank, who live in an atmosphere of apocalyptic narcissism. It is about the disaffection of those who are stranded in a confusion of personal freedom and social hopelessness. Eustache's method resembles the static randomness of the Warhol-Morrissey pictures, but the randomness here is not a matter of indifference; it's a conscious goal. The actors—Jean-Pierre Léaud, Bernadette Lafont, Françoise Lebrun, Isabelle Weingarten, and Jacques Renard—were not allowed to deviate from the script, yet Eustache wants the look of chance. He tries to push viewers beyond patience—to rub our noses in his view of reality. Implicitly, he is saying, "I'm going to show you more of the tormented soul than anybody has ever shown you before." This soul belongs to a poor young nurse named Veronika, and the picture stands or falls on the viewer's attitude toward her recital of her sexual humiliations and her loathing of sex without love. In French.—P.K. (Walter Reade Theatre; March 8-10.)

Murmur of the Heart (1971)—Louis Malle's exhilarating high comedy about French bourgeois life. He looks into his own back yard—the film is set in Dijon in 1954 at the time of Dien Bien Phu, and it's about the sex education of the fourteen-year-old Laurent (Benoit Ferreux), the youngest, brightest son of a successful gynecologist (Daniel Gélin) and his Italian-born wife (Léa Massari). Malle sees not only the prudent, punctilious surface but the volatile and slovenly life underneath. His bourgeois bestiary is funny and appalling and also—surprisingly—hardy and happy. This is perhaps the first time on film that anyone has shown us the bourgeoisie enjoying its privileges. Though the movie itself reveals the sources of Malle's humor, this story probably wouldn't have been nearly so funny or, perhaps, so affectionate if Malle had told it fifteen years earlier. Massari is superb as Clara, the carelessly sensual mother; Clara is shamelessly loose and free, and she's loved by her sons because of her indifference to the bourgeois forms, which they nevertheless accept—on the surface, that is. The story moves toward its supremely logical yet imaginative conclusion so stealthily that the kicker joke is perfect. With Michel Lonsdale as Father Henri. The script is by Malle. In French.—P.K. (8th St. Playhouse; March 8-9.)

Naked Lunch—David Cronenberg's movie isn't really an adaptation of William S. Burroughs' famous novel. It's more like a brisk and well-organized tour of Burroughs Country. The movie is content to pay homage to the novel; Cronenberg's screenplay is an attempt to imagine where this bizarre, unaccountable work of genius might have come from, to get inside the mind of a writer caught in the unnatural act of making literature. The hero is a gaunt, ghostly-looking junkie called William Lee (Peter Weller)—a name Burroughs often used to designate his fictional alter ego. And the primary setting is a place called Interzone, a fever-dream rendering of Tangier, where much of the novel was written. The movie amounts to an ingeniously constructed myth of literary inspiration. Weller plays Lee as a dazed automaton and a kind of mystic, and that interpretation is perfectly suited to the movie's image of the artist as the helpless medium of an obscure higher power. Cronenberg accounts for the birth of Burroughs' novel by turning the author into a strung-out St. John of the Cross. This picture is an amazingly tight, coherent piece of work, and it's often funny, but the argument is too tidy and hermetic. Essentially, Cronenberg has made a weird comedy about writing—a narrow, limited subject. The film's striking imagery and peculiar sensibility are surprisingly easy to shrug off. This is a control freak's portrait of a wild man. Also with Judy Davis. Cinematography by Peter Suschitzky. The score, by Howard Shore, features sax solos by Ornette Coleman.—T.R. (2/10/92) (Movieland 8th Street Triplex, First & 62nd Cinemas, and 57th St. Playhouse.)

The first Hollywood release about anti-Semitism, "Crossfire," was based on Richard Brooks's novel "The Brick Foxhole," which involves the murder of a homosexual. The producer, Adrian Scott, and the screenwriter, John Paxton, changed the victim to a Jew; the director, Edward Dmytryk, shot the script in twenty days, outstripping "Gentleman's Agreement," a glossier protest against anti-Semitism that premièred later the same year, 1947. (Both movies are playing March 8-9, at Film Forum 2.) Critics hailed "Crossfire" as a giant step forward in Hollywood's exploration of racial and religious prejudice. The studios didn't get around to homophobia for several decades.

Robert Ryan delineates a homicidal bigot with subtlety as well as force. He plays a soldier named Montgomery, who meets a man named Samuels in a Washington, D.C., bar and beats him to death; then he manages to get the blame pinned on the one G.I. who was friendly to Samuels. Ryan keeps the movie taut with the tug-of-war between Montgomery's volatility and his shrewdness. He shows the cop in charge of the case (Robert Young) an eager, blameless face, making his anti-Semitism seem nothing more than a commonplace trait. The detective accepts him at face value, because he's searching for motives more specific than anti-Semitism.

The acting is uniformly strong: the refreshingly dry and intelligent Young holds his own not only with Ryan but also with the magnetic Robert Mitchum, who plays a tough sergeant. Sermons aside, the movie's flaws are inherent in its form. Ryan is so powerful that viewers want more of his psychotic killer than the swift arc of action allows. Featured players like Paul Kelly create such vivid impressions in seconds that audiences want to linger with them longer. All the thriller elements click. "Crossfire" is as compelling and gritty as a tight race on a gravel track.

The Prince of Tides—Barbra Streisand's film, adapted from Pat Conroy's 1986 novel, is a big, earnest psychoanalytic soap opera. It's a story in which people come to terms with their past, make peace with the demons that have haunted them since childhood, learn how to let go of the "dysfunctional" emotional patterns inflicted on them by their parents, and become sensitive, caring human beings. Streisand treats this banal material affectionately, even reverently, but it plays better on the screen than it does on the page. Her direction is smooth and canny, and she has distilled the novel to its corn-based essence. But the fumes of the book's terrible ideas linger in the air. After a while, everything begins to feel predictable. Conroy's narrative method (he co-wrote the screenplay, with Becky Johnston) consists of establishing characters who embody common stereotypes, setting them in motion around each other, and then watching them follow the courses that he's mapped for them: his message is one of change and liberation, but his characters' orbits are fixed. As the soul-searching hero, Tom Wingo, Nick Nolte bears the weight of all the movie's ambitions, and, for the most part, he carries his burden with miraculous grace. Streisand plays a sympathetic New York psychiatrist and never seems to get the hang of the role, but most of the cast performs heroically: Blythe Danner, as Tom's wife, and Kate Nelligan, as his mother, are wonderful. This is an admirably scrupulous job of literary adaptation; it's the material that's dysfunctional.—T.R. (1/27/92) (Loews Village Theatre VII, Worldwide Cinemas, and Loews Festival. . . . ¶ Loews Orpheum VII, and 23rd St. West Triplex. Evenings only. . . . ¶ Metro Cinema; through March 5, evenings only.)

The Spider's Stratagem (1970)—Before he made "The Conformist," Bernardo Bertolucci made this adaptation of Jorge Luis Borges' enigmatic "Theme of the Traitor and Hero" for Italian television. Shot in Sabbioneta, a miniature city between Mantua and Parma, with colonnades that suggest de Chirico, the film is mysteriously beautiful; it has heightened colors and evocative imagery. But Giulio Brogi, playing both the son and the hero father whose death the son is investigating, is given no character as either, and he lacks energy. The film itself is enervated, and the themes are frustratingly elusive; it's all atmosphere and no strength. With Alida Valli, still splendidly handsome, and with that same secret look she had in "The Third Man." Cinematography by Vittorio Storaro. In Italian.—P.K. (American Museum of the Moving Image; March 7.)

This Is My Life—With Julie Kavner, Samantha Mathis, and Gaby Hoffmann; directed by Nora Ephron. (Reviewed in this issue.) (Coronet.)

Titicut Follies (1967)—Fred Wiseman's first documentary, photographed in the state hospital for the criminally insane at Bridgewater, Massachusetts. Crude in technique, but a revealing (and shocking) piece of visual muckraking. It has some unforgettable scenes.—P.K. (Film Forum; starting March 4.)

Wayne's World—"Saturday Night Live" has become a repackaging industry. The extended antics of vidiot savants Wayne Campbell (Mike Myers) and Garth Algar (Dana Carvey) betray the same slapped-together quality as the TV specials "Toonces, the Cat Who Could Drive a Car" and "Saturday Night Live Goes Commercial," though the film is not as entertaining. Seen in five-minute spurts on "S.N.L.," beaming out their cable-access program from Wayne's basement, these two come off as cracked bellwethers of the Next Big Things of suburban youth culture, Hard Rock Division. (Their pre-"Truth or Dare" show with Madonna was a classic.) In the movie, Myers still boasts his inexplicably confident and cheery expressions—he's a mischievous smile button. But Carvey overworks his twisted mouth. Wayne and Garth weren't meant to be frozen on celluloid the way they are in this parody of coöptation, which casts them as victims of a manipulative commercial-TV promoter (Rob Lowe). Here they function as leaders of a nostalgia-fest for audiences with short attention spans, paying homage to, yes, "Terminator 2" as well as syndicated TV favorites like "Laverne and Shirley" and "Mission: Impossible." (Sadly, the Tooncinator fails to make a guest appearance.) Carvey has one good bit, playing out a murder with some frosted crullers, and the ever-game Lowe musters up a funny walk after a cop gives him a heavy frisk. Penelope Spheeris directed, from a script by Myers, Bonnie Turner, and Terry Turner.—M.S. (Loews Village Theatre VII, Loews 34th Street Showplace, Loews New York Twin, Loews Orpheum VII, Chelsea Cinemas, Loews 34th Street Sixplex, and Loews Astor Plaza.)

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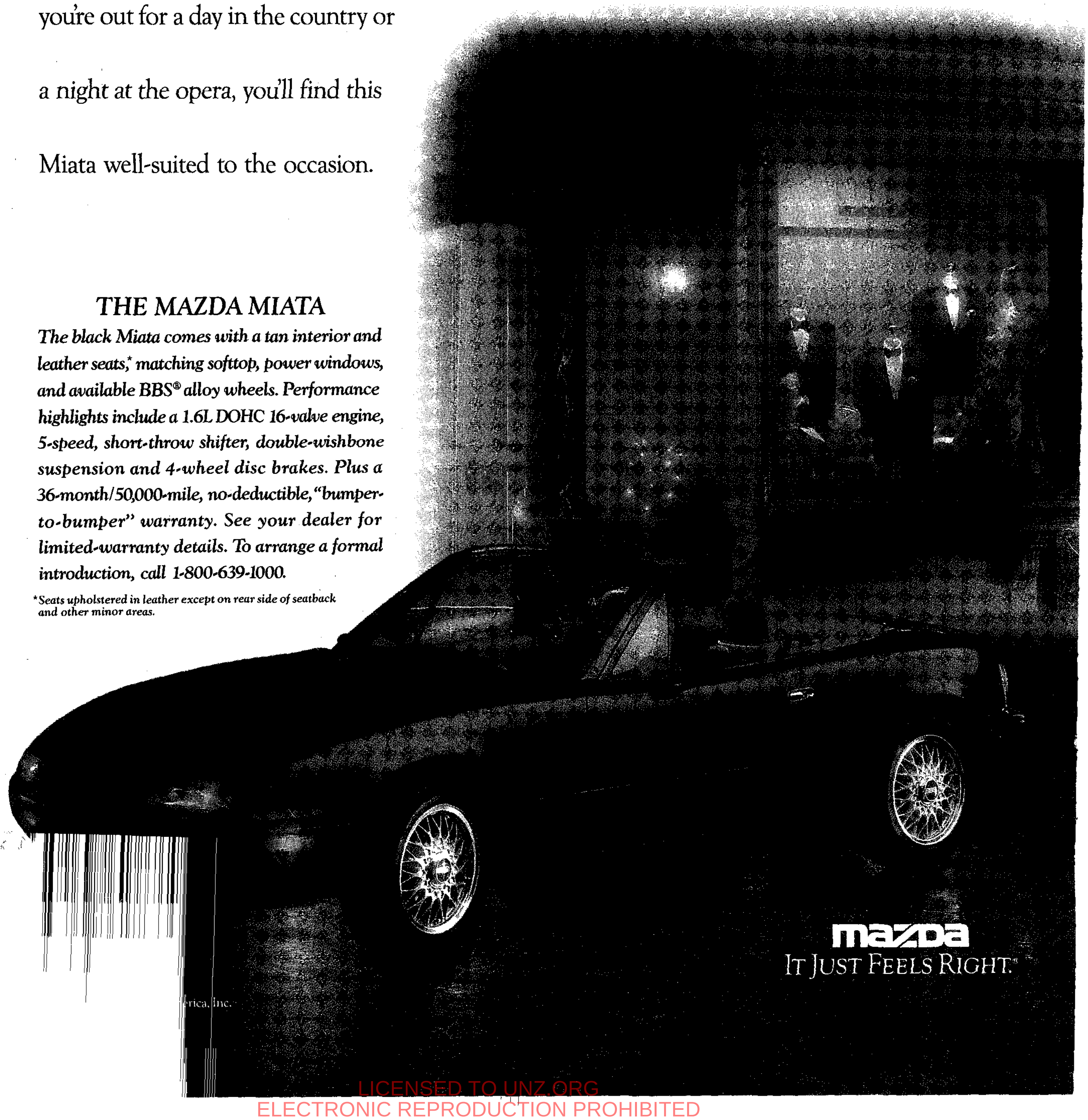
**Seats upholstered in leather except on rear side of seatback and other minor areas.*



rica, Inc.

THE NEW YORKER

THE TALK OF THE TOWN

Notes and Comment

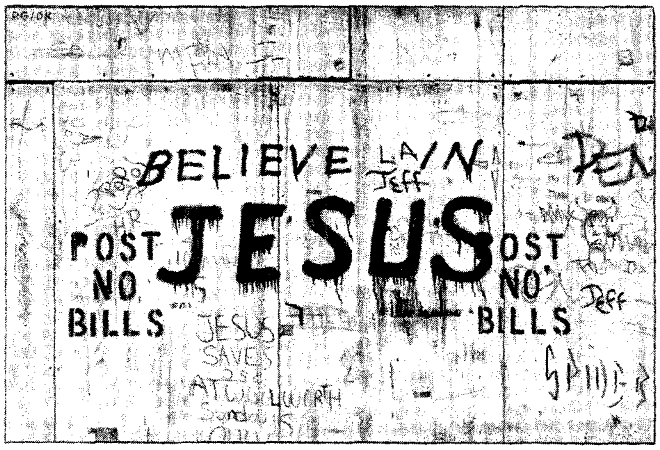
IN late January, President Bush recalled his Ambassador to Haiti to protest an assassination attempt against the country's newly chosen Prime Minister, who was supposed to serve as a bridge between Haiti's deposed President, Jean-Bertrand Aristide, and the Army, which had deposed him. The attack on the Prime Minister was the most publicized incident in what Amnesty International has called "a climate of fear and repression" in Haiti, but there have been many others. In a report issued just before the attack, Amnesty said that "hundreds of people have been extrajudicially executed"—killed in the street, for no apparent reason—"or detained without warrant and tortured." The organization's executive director, John Healey, estimated that fifteen hundred Haitians had been killed since the coup, and compared Haiti to Cambodia's killing fields. Yet in the same week that the Ambassador was recalled the Justice Department won an appeal it had made to the Supreme Court to be allowed to deport Haitian refugees from Guantánamo Bay Naval Base, where they have been warehoused by the government since fleeing their country. The appeal maintained that the Haitians were economic, not political, refugees.

It is certainly true that most of the people leaving Haiti are poor, but so are most of those who have stayed; Haiti is the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere. It is also true that the Haitian economy has become a shambles in the months since the coup, on September 30th, after which sanctions were imposed by much of the world. But the refugees never said that they left Haiti *only* because they couldn't get a job or enough to eat. They said that they left because soldiers and policemen had intimidated them or had imprisoned, or even murdered, their friends and relatives.

Since 1981, Haitian refugees intercepted by the American Coast Guard have routinely been returned, but the Bush Administration initially suspended that policy for the Haitians fleeing after the coup, and they were allowed to remain on Coast Guard ships. It was not until mid-November, when it became clear that the flow of people out of Haiti was not going to stop, that the first attempts were made to return them. Only those who had managed to carry some proof of their troubles with them—about a third of the total—were allowed to come to the United States. Among those who have been returned, some have recanted their stories, but, as one young man put it, "if we tell the truth here, we could be shot." According to John Healey, the simple act of having left will insure that those refugees who return to Haiti will be seen as supporters of Aristide and will be targeted by the Army for reprisals; Haitian police are interviewing and fingerprinting all the returnees, including small children.

After a series of court battles, the repatriations began in earnest on February 1st, and stories of retribution soon began to filter out of Haiti. In mid-February, lawyers for the refugees again challenged the repatriation policy before the Supreme Court, and again the Court allowed the repatriations to continue. The State Department insists that there is "no evidence" of acts of retributory violence, but human-rights groups have been reporting a growing number of stories like that of a young man who only hours after his return was warned by a soldier that "we'll come and kill you."

In early February, President Bush decided to relax the sanctions. Since then, there have been fewer refugees leaving Haiti, but their numbers are still considerable. The easing of the sanctions has lifted some of the economic burden on the poor, but, inevitably, anything that helps the Haitian economy strengthens the new Haitian government to some extent, and many Haitians still say that they will leave at the first chance. The government seems to have taken the President's action as encouragement to advertise its control over the country; it recently announced that police officers involved in the attempted assassination of the Prime Minister-designate would not be subject to any disciplinary action. Nothing has been said about prosecution in any of the hundreds of murders and attempted murders since September. And it is not at all clear whether the coup lead-



ers will accept the terms of a tentative power-sharing agreement reached at recent negotiations, sponsored by the Organization of American States, about the possible return of Aristide to Haiti. President Bush is apparently optimistic, and the State Department announced that, as a result of the agreement, our Ambassador would be sent back to Haiti. But it could take months for Aristide to be guaranteed a safe return, and it is entirely likely that even then he would find not shared power but only a power struggle.

Last month, on the first anniversary of Aristide's inauguration, a thousand Haitians marched in New York, many of them carrying homemade signs saying things like "Liberty for All—Why Not Haiti?" and "Let the People Make Their Choice—Father Aristide." In spite of the O.A.S.-sponsored agreement, such signs probably represent wishful thinking. A simple black-and-white sign that said "Democracy or Death" describes accurately the situation of many of the refugees. By insisting on returning them, President Bush seems to be suggesting that brutality does not matter if its victims are poor and, perhaps, that poor people are incapable of leaving their country for reasons other than economic ones. In fact, by easing the sanctions without demanding anything in return—guarantees of human rights for Haiti's citizens, for example, or a pledge to abide by the results of the negotiations—the President seems to be echoing the Haitian government's attitude toward its citizens, which is that they have rights only when it's convenient.

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Policemen's Ball

EVERY so often, we rush off to an event that turns out to be something other than what we expected, and though we strive to present our usual aura of confidence and professionalism, our thoughts run along the lines of "What are we doing here?" and "What made us get into this line of work in the first place?" Just the other night, we showed up at One Police Plaza for an occasion that a friend had referred to as the Policemen's Ball—a phrase that suggested a roomful of police officers dressed to the nines and dancing away—and discovered that most of the police personnel in attendance were drawn from the ranks of captain and above; that they were greatly outnumbered by corporate executives and other private-sector types, who had paid hundreds of dollars a plate to aid the philanthropic activities of a group called the New York City Police Foundation, whose annual fund-raising gala this was; that the appearance of the Emerald Society Pipes and Drums, followed by a series of short tributes to the evening's guests of honor—Patrick V. Murphy, the former police commissioner, and John V. Lindsay, the former mayor—and some brief, unprepared remarks by Mayor David Dinkins and the current police commissioner, Lee Brown, among others, constituted the entire formal agenda of the evening; and that, notwithstanding the presence of Lester Lanin and his orchestra, most of the guests were so wrapped up in their eating and drinking that only a handful of people took the trouble to dance. Just when we were feeling lowest, however, a group of men was whisked on and off the stage, too hurriedly for us to catch who they were, and we set down our wineglass, rose, and headed over to their table, where we learned that, beneath their tuxedos, they were actual rank-and-file cops, six in all, who had just received the annual H. Dale Hemmerdinger awards—funded by the real-estate developer of that name—for "exceptional public service."

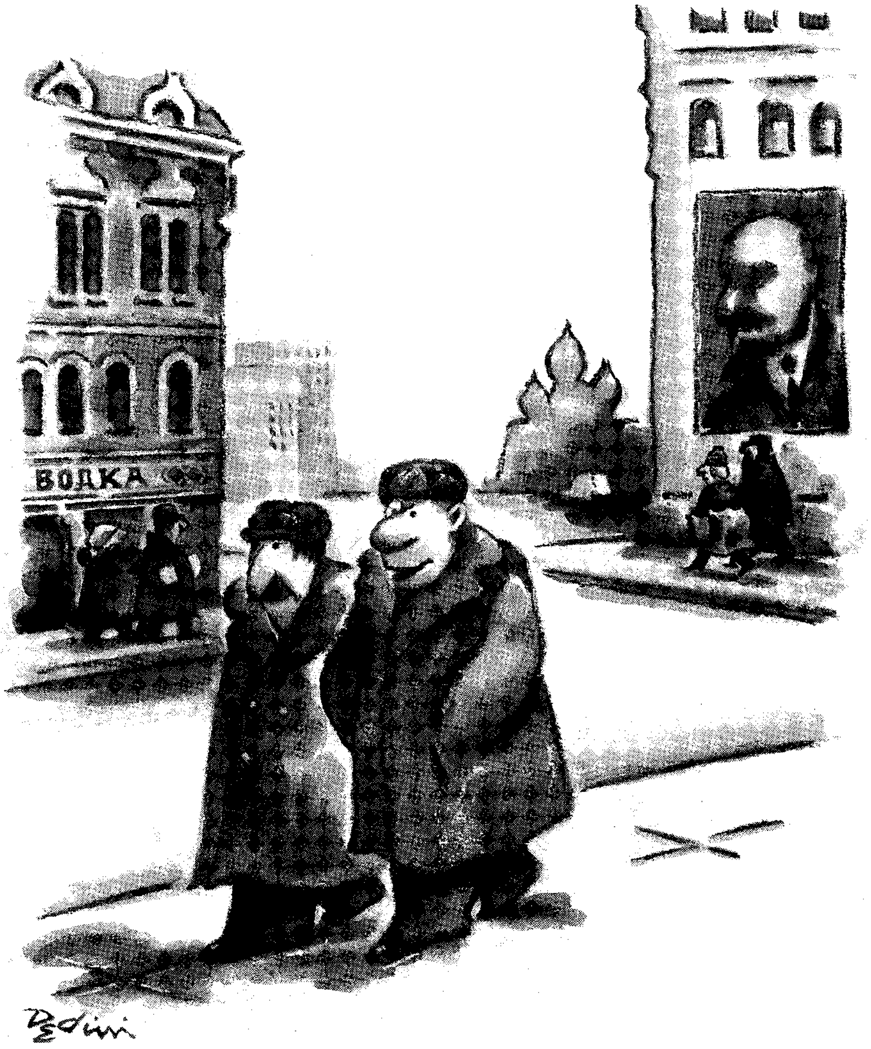
We spoke first to Robert Manuella, a stocky patrolman with a thin mustache and a large store of enthusiasm for the department's avowed commitment to "community policing." He was being honored for his efforts in a twenty-square-block area of the Crown Heights section of Brooklyn, where he has created community gardens and playgrounds in vacant lots formerly frequented by drug dealers and other undesirables. "If you saw these lots eight years ago, and you saw them now, you wouldn't recognize them," Officer Manuella told us. "We have people coming out of the woodwork saying, 'How can we help you?' I'm just waiting till April comes around and we can get back out there and develop more lots."

LOCAL DELIVERY
dagdart

Larry Williams had received his Hemmerdinger for his work as a youth officer in the Forty-third Precinct—a piece of the East Bronx that includes thirty schools. The job of youth officer traditionally goes to a veteran cop on the brink of retirement—one who is looking for a day-shift assignment that can largely be handled from behind a desk. "I'm in the streets every day," Officer Williams, who is tall and good-looking, told us. "Anything that has to do with kids up in that area, I respond." His formal working hours are seven-thirty to four, Monday through Friday, but he is often on the job well into the evening, and he makes a regular practice of attending high-school dances. "I go because I figure that if anything breaks out, the kids know me," he said. "When I was a boy, I was taught that whatever job you get in life you put your all into it. So when my lieutenant told me he was putting me in for this award it was a shocking thing to me. I feel as if I'm just out there doing what I'm supposed to be doing."

Sergeant Angelo Dimino, who has a Marine Corps crewcut and a bearing to match, works at headquarters helping to administer the biweekly police auctions of vehicles and other seized property. Like Officer Williams, he seemed surprised by his award, which had been given to him for reorganizing the auction procedures and, in the process, uncovering some missing funds and other signs of questionable conduct on the part of a private auctioneer, whose services were subsequently dispensed with. "All I did was institute a couple of changes in the procedure," he told us.

Of all the recipients we spoke to, the one who seemed most excited about his Hemmerdinger was Michael Fandel, a forty-two-year-old patrolman whose regular job is to guard the Police Academy from midnight until eight in the morning, but who was being honored for his periodic appearances (generally after hours) in schools and other settings as Ernest Desire, the crime-fighting clown. "My uncle was a police inspector—he was the family's symbol of success," Officer Fandel said. "My father was a nurse. My mother was an activist. My sister was a teacher. I took from everybody." His clown persona had come to him, he recalled, after he was laid off in the city's 1975 fiscal crisis, and took up acting and teaching. "I decided to combine the stage, the street, and the classroom," he said. "I like to arouse kids. I try to get them to treasure themselves, not trash themselves. I get them laughing, and I give them pointers on personal safety, like 'Walk like an exclamation point, not a question mark.' I tell them, 'Drug dealers may try to befriend you, but they will not go to your funeral, and they won't send flowers.' I educate them to the fact that a police officer is an approachable, warm, human individual. I used to be assigned to a paddy wagon sometimes, and I would sing anti-crime songs to the prisoners. I'm single, right? Closeness makes me a little uncomfortable. I'm working at changing that, but in the meantime a lot of the passion that will go to my eventual partner goes to the world."



"They should open the files—Lenin never said all those crazy things attributed to him."

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Tesserae

WHEN we last reported on the activities of our friend the British stonecutter Simon Verity, he was hewing likenesses of major and minor prophets out of immense chunks of limestone up at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine. This task was being accomplished in the open air, on a scaffold erected in front of the arched central portal of the cathedral—not the coziest place in the world at this time of year, especially for an artist reed-thin and ill-protected against the elements. (For reasons best known to himself, Mr. Verity's working gear consists of threadbare hand-me-down garments, seemingly held together by stone dust.) Having feared that a gust of unruly winter wind might sweep Mr. Verity off his high cathedral perch and bear him skyward over Morningside Park, we are relieved to report that for the past several weeks he has been at work more or less snugly indoors, in a heated makeshift studio on the northwest corner of Forty-fifth Street and Sixth Avenue. This ground-floor space will eventually become a shop in the skyscraper office building that a Japanese company, Kumagai Gumi, is completing on the block front between Forty-fifth and Forty-sixth Streets. The building, designed by the architectural firm of Swanke Hayden Connell, is to be called Americas Tower, and, in part to celebrate the opening of the building, and in part to celebrate a decade of corporate activity here in New York, Kumagai Gumi has commissioned Mr. Verity to fashion an immense diamond-shaped work of art called "The Gorgeous Mosaic"—an emblem of the phrase by which Mayor Dinkins defines the multifarious ethnic groups that make up the population of New York.

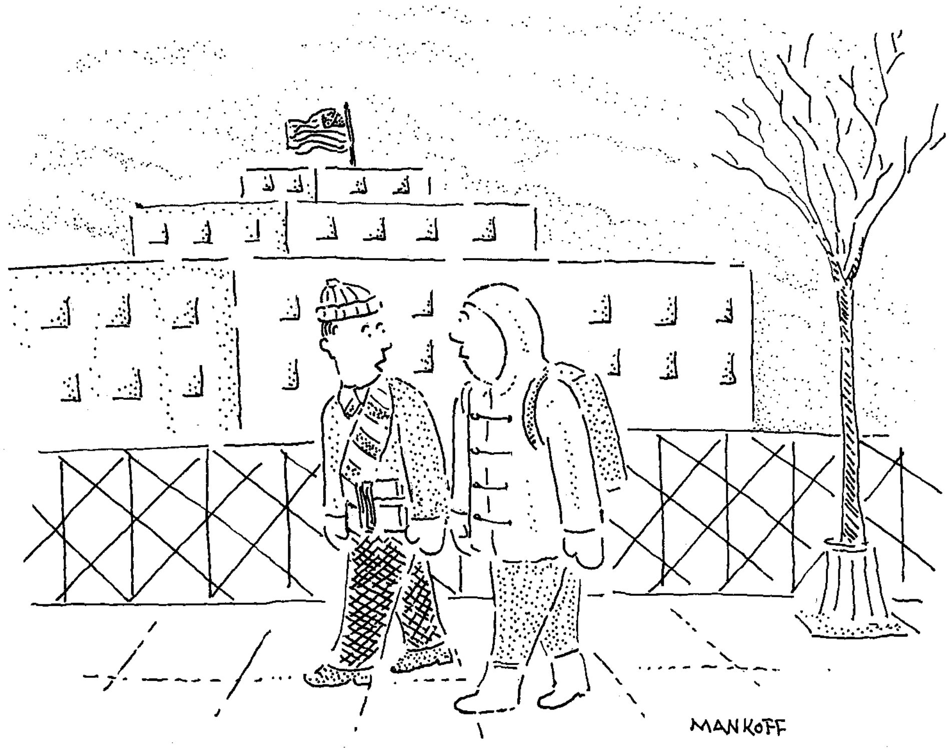
The mosaic, which is twenty-two feet high by thirteen feet wide, will offer what amounts to a seagull's-eye view of the city, with crowds hastening back and forth in the widest portion of the diamond, and buildings and bridges filling the ever-narrowing tips, in a perspective that paradoxically expands as it recedes. Many of the structures in the composition—the Brooklyn Bridge, City Hall, and the like—are easily recognizable. The city will be depicted both by day (upper portion of the diamond) and by night (lower portion), rising in a romantic jumble within the embrace of its two mighty rivers. The mosaic will be unveiled in the lobby of Americas Tower on April 30th, when Kumagai Gumi plans to stage a daylong series of public and private festivities. After remaining on display for six months or so, the work is expected to be permanently installed wherever the city fathers think best—ideally, in some public arcade or lobby where it will enjoy the maximum degree of visibility.

At the moment, "The Gorgeous Mosaic" consists of tens of thousands of tesserae—squarish bits of stone and glass—heaped in battered-looking tin trays on the concrete floor. Whether at St. John the Divine or back home in England, where he made his sculptural début in Canterbury Cathedral, carving a memorial to Thomas à Becket in the presence of some ten thousand daily visitors, Mr. Verity has long been accustomed to strangers watching him at work and, often enough, volunteering encouragement and advice. Pedestrians passing the unfinished Americas Tower are often brought to a halt by glimpsing through its big windows half a dozen workers busily engaged in breaking up small stones and fitting them into place on odd-shaped sheets of paper, which can be seen to bear smudgy black-and-white markings of an indecipherable nature.

Having been brought to just such a bemused halt ourself and having spotted Mr. Verity among the workers, we stepped inside and paid a professional call on him. Except for a pair of sporty green suspenders, he was looking more ragamuffinlike than ever, and his spiky hair appeared to be carrying more than its usual cargo of stone dust and other occupational debris. He led us on a quick tour of the intricate maze of tesserae-filled trays, explaining that he had sought to provide himself with an exceptionally diverse palette of colors for "The Gorgeous Mosaic." "I've taken the adjective 'gorgeous' to heart," he said. "We've some forty or fifty species of stones here—marble, onyx, limestone, slate, granite, travertine—from twenty or thirty different countries, including Brazil, Greece, Italy, and France. We've red lava from New Mexico, and even some samples of Manhattan schist, excavated from practically under our feet. As for the glass tesserae, most of them come from Murano, outside Venice, but we're willing to make use of any stone or glass that happens to cross our path. Broken statuary, discarded balusters, curbstones. One of the brand-new glass doors in this very building got smashed in the course of construction, so we swept up the pieces, tossed them into our tumbling machine to smooth off the edges, and will be putting them to excellent use in the mosaic."

Following his custom at St. John the Divine, Mr. Verity has recruited for the making of "The Gorgeous Mosaic" a mosaic of young assistants, diverse in race, education, artistic background, and surname: Theresa Robb, Kirsten Westphal, David St. John-James, Ernesto Gomez, Deborah Ehrlich, Kathryn Clark, Javaka Steptoe, Cynthia Lathrop, and Kyung-Lim Lee. Also on hand is Mr. Verity's son Tom, who is nineteen and whose mode of dress is almost as eccentric as his father's. (We noticed that the shoelaces of Tom's heavy boots were made of shiny copper wire.) Tom is on leave from his regular occupation, which is supplying dressed oak beams and other heavy timber for restoration projects in the British Isles. The tens of thousands of tesserae that Tom and his companions have cut, chipped, and split are anchored face down upon the design sheets with a wheat paste similar to that commonly used to put up wallpaper. Once all the sheets are completed, they are embedded in mortar with their paper-covered side up and their never-henceforth-to-be-seen back side down; when the mortar has hardened, the sheets are wetted and peeled off.

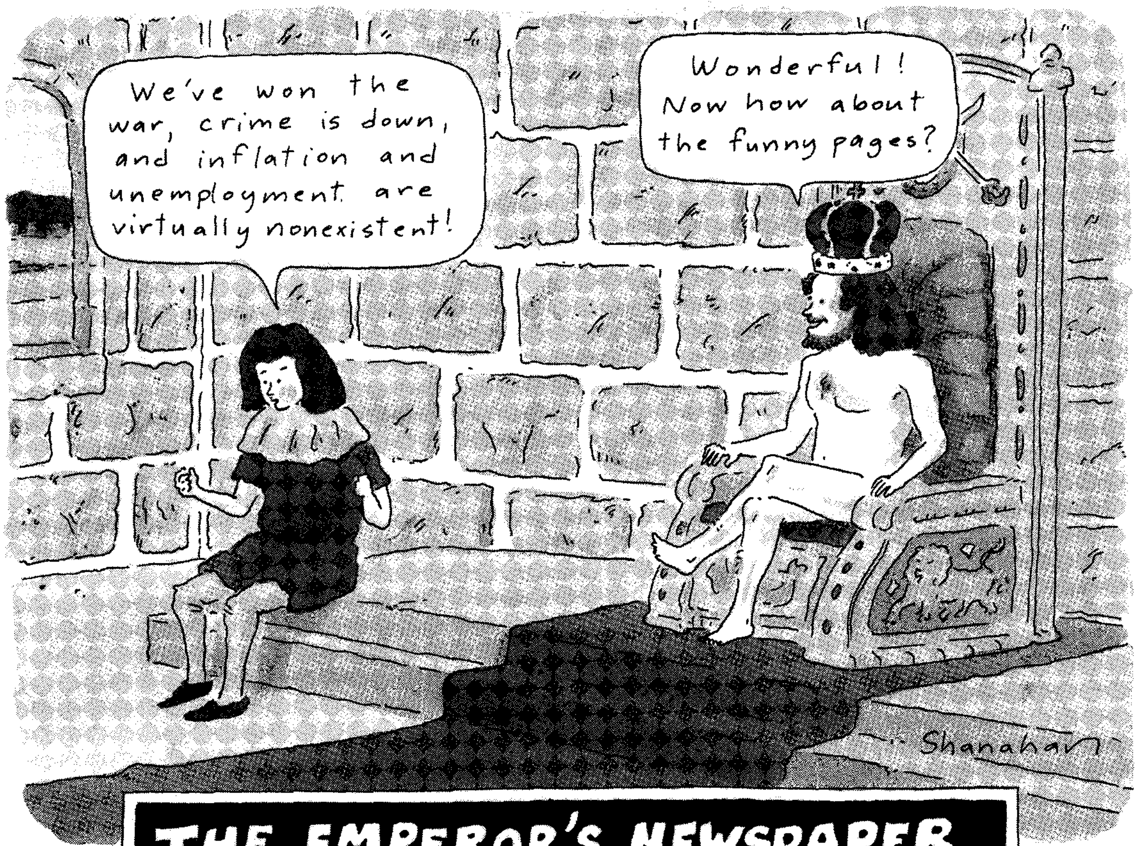
By the time Americas Tower opens and the great, many-colored diamond hangs on the lobby wall, spring will have arrived and Mr. Verity will be back at work on the west front of the cathedral. He says that he will be sorry to abandon his improvised atelier on Sixth Avenue. "The crowds peering in at us as we work—we've found that their interest somehow leaches in through the glass and gives us energy," he says. "Mosaic-making is hard work. We finish only about three square feet of surface a day. It's one of the oldest forms of art—many thousands of years old. The hammers and other tools we use have a prehistoric look, and no wonder." He pointed to a couple of flat-topped willow stumps, from whose rough bark tender shoots were defiantly emerging. "We drive a steel blade called a hardy into the top of a stump, place a stone on the hardy, strike it just so with a hammer, and the stone responds by splitting. The stump serves to absorb some of the shock of the blow and makes our task less tiring. A few months ago, those willows were growing by a stream up in Connecticut. Centuries ago, mosaic-makers in Rome would have chopped down willows to make the same use of them that we do." Mr. Verity snapped his green suspenders. "What a welcome lack of progress one enjoys in the arts!" he said. "It gives one hope."



"I'm afraid my youthful transgressions may already have eliminated any chance for me to be President."

Merchandise

WHENEVER we get fed up with winter weather, we like to fly down to Orlando, eat so-called Mexican and so-called Chinese food in the vicinity of Walt Disney World, wander among the booths of manufacturers of golf-related equipment and providers, and play a few rounds of golf. At least, that's what we did a few weeks ago, when the Professional Golfers' Association of America was hold-


We've won the war, crime is down, and inflation and unemployment are virtually nonexistent!
Wonderful! Now how about the funny pages?
Shanahan

THE EMPEROR'S NEWSPAPER

ing its annual Merchandise Show at the Orange County Convention/Civic Center. Merchandise interests us, and golf merchandise interests us deeply.

One thing that interests us almost as much as golf merchandise is hat hair. Hat hair occurs when you play golf in a hat for several hours and then take off the hat. Hat hair is the result of perspiration and hat-related pressure, and it consists of roughly equal parts of flatness, dampness, messiness, and sticking-outness. What made us think of hat hair at the Merchandise Show was Greg Norman, the world-famous Australian golfer. Norman was signing autographs for a large group of admirers, and the top part of his hair was clinging tightly to his head, while the bottom part was sticking out. That was odd, because as far as we could tell he had not recently been playing golf or wearing a hat. After thinking for quite a while, we realized that Norman must have had his hair cut to resemble hat hair, making his hair style look the same whether he has been playing golf or not—a very practical decision for someone in his line of work.

The thing we probably saw the most of at the Merchandise Show was great big golf clubs. A couple of years ago, a company came out with a driver that had an oversized head. It was designed to be more forgiving of bad swings than ordinary drivers are, in something of the same way that oversized tennis racquets are more forgiving of bad swings than old-fashioned tennis racquets are. Since then, many other manufacturers have come out with big-headed drivers, too. Virtually all these new drivers also have big names. At the show, we saw jumbo drivers called Launcher, Whale, Wide Body, Fat Eddie, Big Bertha, Big Z, Big Ben, Big Head, Mr. Big, Top Dawg, and The Judge. We also saw a driver called The Hammer. It didn't have a big head, but it was meant to be forgiving anyway, on account of its internal "hammerpiece," patent pending.

Our three favorite booths at the Merchandise Show were the Kasco Corp. of America booth, the Hi-Tech Golf booth, and the Wilson booth. At all these booths, people were giving away free golf balls. When we walked into the Wilson booth, a woman handed us two brand-new golf balls. When we walked out, another woman handed us two more. Every fifteen minutes or so, we would go back. Pretty soon, we had so many free golf balls in our pockets that the only thing for us to do was go play golf.

One of the most surprising things about Walt Disney World, in our opinion, is that its almost unbelievably vast facilities include several of the best golf courses in the country. Shortly before our visit, two brand-new Disney golf courses had been added, bringing the total to six. One of these courses, called Osprey Ridge, was designed by Tom Fazio, who is a very famous golf-course architect. The other, called Eagle Pines, was designed by Pete Dye, who may be even more famous. We played Osprey Ridge twice and Eagle Pines once.

The first time we played Osprey Ridge, the course starter grouped us with three young radiologists. One of the radiologists had a beeper in his pocket, and he stopped several times during the round to talk to patients on a cellular phone that he kept beside him on the seat of his golf cart. He would say, "Just a minute. I have to check your file." Then he would put the phone on hold and hit his ball. The second time we played Osprey Ridge, the starter grouped us with three men who had come to Orlando to attend a pharmaceutical convention. One of these men was from Puerto Rico. As his putts were rolling toward the hole, he did not say, "Go in!," the way many native English speakers do; instead, he said, "Enter!" Another of the pharmaceutical guys also spoke to his ball a lot, referring to it as "Darling." When we played Eagle Pines, the starter grouped us with three assistant golf professionals from a small golf course somewhere in Kentucky. Like us, the assistant professionals had sneaked out of the Merchandise Show. And, like us, they were in no particular hurry to go back.

CYBERPREZ

A President with a chemical between himself and reality is the last thing America needs.
—*Benjamin J. Stein, "Our Man in Nirvana," Times Op-Ed page.*

"What's got into you?" The mirrors followed him across the room.
"I forget how to pronounce it," he said, taking a tightly rolled strip of bubble-packed blue derms from his shirt pocket.
"Christ," she said, "just what we needed." —*William Gibson, "Neuromancer."*

As soon as the Cabinet meeting adjourned the President reached for a handful of the bright-red pills. Betaphenyls—the infamous Lithuanian brain blasters his C.I.A. lab lizards had cooked up during the glory days of the Cold War. Real elephant zonkers, but cut just right—a tab of compacted delta dust and a finger of Indonesian horse wine—the potent curare analogue delivered the mellowest near-death buzz this side of a Keith cocktail.

Just say . . . gimme.

He gobbled the blood-red capsules and let out what might have passed for a laugh as the paralyzing chemo-cocktail scorched a jagged gash across the myriad forkings of his neuromesh, slam-dancing his meninges and sending tsunamis of delight undulating along his spinal column.

On the Oval Office scan a ghostly Nixon construct *sleazed into view*. "Long time no interface," piped the flickering holofax.

"I thought you'd folded," said the Prez. He was having trouble focussing. "Word around the plex is that you went megawig, blanked the tape, crashed." The glow of the betas was kicking in hard now, dominoing an enzyme rush from his hippocampus straight up to Heaven, pleasure beyond anything to which the name of pleasure is given.

The shadowy Nixon rehab made a sound like a growl. Its dark jowls flexed—not quite a smile. The pale arms shot up, wide. Meat reflex, thought the President. Weird. "I am not a crook," the construct intoned in its hollow chip voice.

"Yeah, right," sneered the Prez. "And my Veep's not a Cray-Disney quantum foamboy hair-spray electro-puppet. Get real, Mister."

He snorted a line of Tibetan gamma dust, put a three-month moratorium on new government regulations for business, and reduced Medicare expenditures.

"It's funny to hear you, of all people, saying 'right,' " the Nixon holofax intoned. "In my book, Buck Cannon is the one true heir to the Reagan right."

The President mainlined an ampule of Babylonian Blue. The steaming monkey juice Martinized his synapses in a blaze of ecstasy. Reagan right? Gimme a break. The Ronzer had been flatlined for years. Overload on those antique circuits. Neurojuices hyper-pumped on dead receptors. And Buck Cannon? The guy was nothing more than a hi-rez simstim construct the military/industrial/media boys had slapped together out of subelectronic matrices and silicon chips. A CNN talking head.

As suddenly as it had appeared, the awful Nixon face faded from the matrix, replaced on the White House console by the shimmering gunmetal gray of the D.C. sky. Capitol static: the reality thing.

The Chief Executive popped a Guatemalan jolly ball, reversed himself on the ozone bill, cut military spending just so much and not a penny more.

Now the President was tumbling in electronic poll space, arms and legs akimbo in an approval free-fall. Images formed and reformed behind his spinning eyeballs: New Uplands. Surrounded in the icy damp. A wool-rich crowd, Thinsulated Gore-Tex Beaners calling for the money, the jobs. If frogs had wings, the Prez reassured them, he would protect those little furry-feathery guys from the Nitty Ditty Gritty Great Bird.

Live free or . . . pay, he thought.

He unpeeled a bright-blue derm, plastered it hard against his forehead. A thousand megavolts of crackling nirvana screamed through his skull, hoovering his ion channels. He fought back an insane urge to advocate national health.

Awake again, maybe, the nation's highest elected official sucked hard on a Chinese happy stick. Or was it a Hungarian fire wand? Either way, the syntho speed barrelled across his blood/brain barrier like a maglev monorail in overdrive.

He reduced taxes on yachts, registered strong disapproval of Japanese trade barriers. Eternal vigilance: the price of . . . paranoia.

There was only one thing to do. The Commander-in-Chief keyed a zapper template to Buck Cannon's biocodes, slotted it in the deck. Glistening beads of sweat broke on his brow, trickled down the silvery leads of his trodes.

He jacked in, flipped for the matrix.

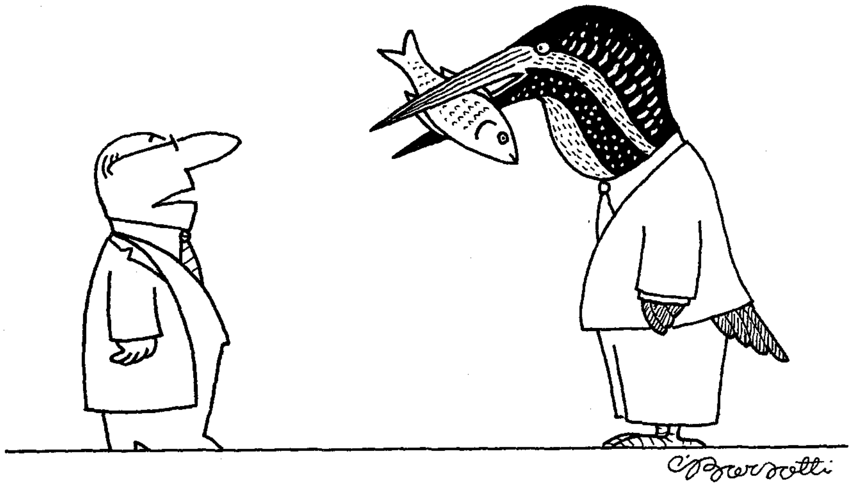
On the scan, translucent swells of shimmering chromolite billowed over the grid in a gossamer-rainbow moiré as elegant as insect wings in the subarctic sunlight. Then a bright white lozenge of light blazed on the scan, oscillated, focussed. The image of his upstart Republican rival froze, vibrated, froze again.

The leader of the free world popped a Tasmanian frog-choker, knocked it back with a litre of Windex. Dapper and drowsy now. Feeling . . . gorby.

He punched hard for the matrix. Missed. Punched again.

From somewhere far, far off, the pungent stench of stir-fried neurons wafted through the Oval Office.

—Richard Liebmann-Smith



"I just assumed we'd be going out for lunch."

THE HIGH PRIEST OF FRIVOLITY

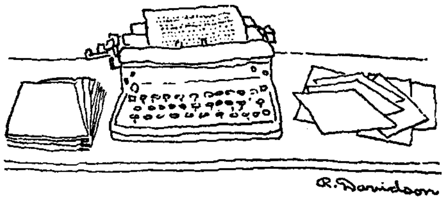
I OWE my life to a series of fortunate coincidences. It is remarkable, too, that an eleven-year-old can realize the cold fact that he can be killed at any time, and yet not falter. In the winter of 1944-45 I thought of death almost the way one thinks of firewood: there was nothing special about it. It was a thing beyond my control, and there was no point in fearing it, for it had as much probability—no more, no less—as drawing a bad card and losing.

The Germans were rounding up Jews in our country town that fall, and when my parents were arrested I made my way to Budapest to stay with relatives. There were certain apartment buildings in the city that were designated protected houses; in these the wealthier, more secular Jews lived, those who had managed to establish contact with the embassy of some neutral country. The less well-off—and the Orthodox Jews, with their beards and black hats—ended up in the ghetto, along with their wives, their *peyis*-wearing sons, and their large-eyed daughters. Their place was there, near the rabbinate and most of the synagogues. They must have felt that this arrangement was proper—as did, no doubt, the diplomats of those neutral countries. Arrow-Cross men, the Hungarian Nazis, who ventured into the ghetto through the wooden fence found a free hunting ground within. Their bullets spared only those they didn't feel like shooting. Immediately after the liberation of the city, I looked into a café at the corner of Klauzál Square. It was piled to the ceiling with corpses. It was not easy to break the icy ground to dig the mass graves.

The building in which our Aunt Zsuzsa had her apartment-studio, on Pozsonyi Road, came under Swiss protection. She, Uncle Arnold, and their daughter, Klára, could have moved to the adjacent building, which was under Swedish protection—rumor had it that Swedish protection was more effective than Swiss—but they decided to stay in their own apartment, which was a nice one, although eighty people were living in it by then. Every evening, all the furniture that could not be slept on was piled in one corner. There were not enough beds or mattresses to go around, but at least everyone had a rug under him. We slept in close proximity; it was a continuous pajama party, and there was always somebody to talk to. We were allowed to leave the building for two hours every morning. On the front entrance hung a yellow star and a sign that said the house was protected by the Swiss government. While Communists, members of the Resistance, and braver souls in general were hiding in all parts of the city, constantly on the move and carrying false papers, the more resigned, and perhaps more timid, middle class hoped to ride out the worst in these protected apartments.

In our apartment, beautiful long-legged young women in ski boots, pants, and heavy sweaters with Norwegian motifs, their abundant hair combed flat, stood around and smoked cigarettes. They laughed at things I did not understand—but Klára understood. Not at all like their small-town counterparts, these women were cynical, enigmatic, radical, and refined. They spoke of French Surrealists, German Expressionists, and Russian abstractionists as old friends. They were modern dancers and could stretch their bodies. For us, the children, they sang the "Internationale" and Russian revolutionary songs. I was in love with all of them, but especially with Zsuzsa, who was around thirty then. I would have loved to do something heroic for her. She'd call to me in a drawl, "Will you come and escort me, my cavalier?" I would have escorted her to Hell itself. I turned fiery red when Zsuzsa walked into the bathroom once and saw me naked. For her sake I was willing to eat with a thick novel clamped under each arm, to learn to hold my elbows in.

Half the occupants of the apartment had soon been shot, and thrown into the Danube. That made more room. Those who were frightened moved down to the cellar, but Zsuzsa could not separate human dignity from hygiene. It was out of the question for her to hide from incendiary bombs, cannonballs, and artillery shells in the gloom and stench of the cellar, the cramped confusion of people who hadn't washed recently. Human dignity was worth more than safety, she would say. Not wanting to get lice, we didn't go down to the cellar even when the siren sounded.



The most sensible place for us children to play turned out to be the roof terrace, where every morning the sun was bright, even in the January cold of twenty degrees below zero Centigrade. With a few pails of water we created a splendid ice-skating rink. With the metal taps on the heels of our shoes we could slide grandly across the shiny surface. We stared at the sky when the bombers came, and watched their bellies open, and followed the fall of the bombs to see where they hit. Only the plumes of dust or flame would indicate whether they were explosive or incendiary bombs. Then we watched the smoke rise. On the street below, Germans shouted. The Russians were already near the city, but, in the neighborhood, the Arrow-Cross men were still carrying on their massacre of Jews and of Christian deserters. The word "kill" appeared in every notice posted. Its meaning was clear: you would be shot on sight and left lying where you fell. All through this period, intermittent rifle shots were heard in the streets.

Identification papers no longer meant anything; one's fate was determined only by drunkenness, fear, a moment of empathy or antipathy. People were still being shot, but the armbanded shooters sensed that they would not be able to finish off every Jew. Perhaps, too, they could not work themselves into a manhunting mood every day. To fill the rolling Danube with the wounded bodies of old women and little girls left something to be desired as decorative art. And even these helpless people, of whom the Hungarian Nazis were permitted to kill as many as they liked, expressed, if only by the look in their eyes, a protest—a protest repeated and strengthened by the gaze of witnesses, who watched with some compassion as silent Jews in winter coats were escorted to the lower wharves of the Danube. It must have occurred to the Hungarian Nazis that if the Russians reached the outskirts of Budapest—and the constant booming of artillery indicated that they were on their way—it was not likely that they would stop without entering the city. And if the Russians entered the city, many things would be in store for the Hungarian Nazis—things that did not include medals. An unpleasant thought. The lust to kill left them and flared up again, alternately. To fire at the Russians was dangerous; to shoot the Jews was safe, like shooting clay pigeons.

Life is good luck, death is bad luck. People in the apartment were taken away one night; by chance they were taken from the adjacent room, not from ours. Next day, in the bright winter morning, I am skating on the roof. From a machine gun in a Russian fighter plane overhead, bullets crackle on the ice. A streetcar rattles by, carrying ammunition to the front, which is only five blocks away. I watch the Germans: military fuss, boyish activity around the weapons. Do they really believe they can repel the Russians? The Germans are intelligent, but they don't see what is obvious. And these Arrow-Cross men—they are the trash, the ones who flunk school, who are talented only at torturing cats. A child grows up and learns how childish adults are. Learns that mass murderers are not evil, but only rotten kids with runny noses; rotten kids, even if they are fifty years old.

An armed fourteen-year-old takes unarmed grownups to the bank of the Danube. And, instead of disarming him, they do as he says. Most victims consider inevitable what ought to be fought. The attitude of a gardener to the hail falling on his flowers. Just as a farm animal grows accustomed to the slaughter of its mates, man grows accustomed to the slaughter of his fellow human beings. You cannot be shocked every half hour.

As we children were standing on the roof terrace, the sound of rifle shots came from several places in the neighboring streets. A man was checking another man's papers: an armed person checking an unarmed one. The armed one did not like the face of the unarmed one, so he made him stand against the wall and shot him. And the people taken to the Danube had to line up in a row facing the river. Then came the round of fire, from behind. Yet even all this violent death could not eclipse the icy beauty of that bright winter morning. In the shadow of our doom, bread was more breadlike, jam was more jamlike, and I took pleasure in making firewood out of furniture. Venturing out to the docks and using an axe, we knocked apart a small wharf made of nice, dry pine. The wood, with its white oil paint, burned wonderfully.

WINTER BALL

The squat man under the hoop
throws in short hooks, left-handed, right
in the dwindling sunlight as six lesbians
clown and shoot at the other end
through a very loose game of three on three.

How pleased to be among themselves,
warm New Year's Day afternoon, neither young
nor graceful nor really good shots
but happy for the moment while a mutt
belonging to one of them runs

nearly out of its skin, so glad to be
near the action and smells, vigorous and dumb
but keeping his orbits well clear of the man
who would be a machine now if he could,
angling them in off both sides of the backboard.

You can tell this is a thing he's often done,
the boy who'd shoot till dusk
when starlings exploded, filthy birds,
from roost to roost, gathering only to fly off
at the first sharp sound, hundreds as one.

He'd wonder where they went at night
as he played his solitary game of Round the World,
sinking shots from along the perimeter,
then the lay-up, then the foul.
So intent at it
and grave it almost seemed like more than a game
with dark coming on and the cold.

—AUGUST KLEINZAHLER

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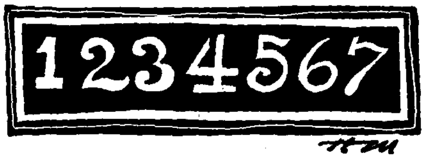
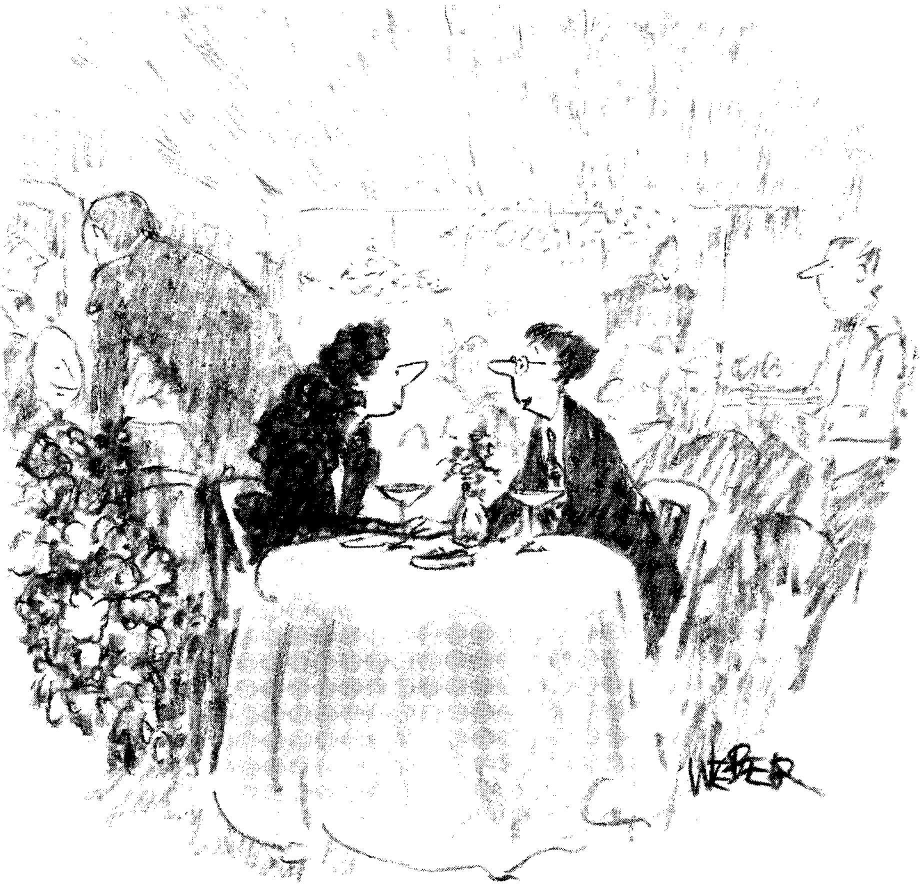
On the roof, Klára would often arrange her braids, tying and untying them. I would pull them sometimes. Klára had beautiful brown earlobes, a small birthmark beneath her nostrils, and a freckle on the tip of her nose. I was given permission to plant a quick kiss on the freckle. A long kiss was forbidden. Klára liked to speak of the parts of her body as independent beings. "The nose has had enough of this," she would say. We wrestled a lot. It wasn't at all easy to get her to the floor. We would roll over and under each other. Sometimes I'd manage to pin her shoulders to the horsehair mattress and lie on her stomach, but then she would bite my wrists so hard that for a long time I'd carry her tooth marks on them. "I dare you to put your hand over the candle," Klára said. I did, and promptly got a small burn on my palm. She kissed it. I tucked my fist into my pocket carefully, as if holding a tiny bird.



Klára could not stand being cooped up all day in the protected house; the curfew for the Jews couldn't possibly apply to her as well. I tried to make her stay inside. I was afraid for her, but did not watch her all the time. She would wander out into the neighborhood, then brag about the things she had seen. But once, when she was stopped by a roving patrol, she had no ready answers. She was taken to the Danube with a group of Jews, and recognized among them one of her aunts. Klára managed to get next to her. They all had to empty their pockets. As they were standing with their hands up, looking at the trees of Margaret Island and the solitary piers of blown-up Margaret Bridge, the aunt was hit and fell into the river. But Klára was unharmed. "Lucky for you I ran out of bullets," said one of the men with submachine guns, an older man, his tone friendly. "Get out of here. Go home and be a good girl!" With this advice he sent Klára on her way. Recognizing her footsteps, I opened the boarded-over front door for her. Klára said, "Let's just stand here, and you hold my hand. Don't let me go out tomorrow. Stay with me all day. Don't tell Mother what happened. They shot Aunt Magda to death right next to me."

The following morning, I was squatting in the courtyard in front of a fireplace made of three bricks and an iron grill; on it, at a painfully slow pace, bean soup was cooking. My job was to stir the soup occasionally, to test the beans for softness, and also to feed cut-off chair legs, one by one, into the embers. Klára was standing behind me, telling me about her first two years in school, when she didn't dare open her mouth. She'd do her homework but never say a word. She would have liked to say hello, at least, to the other children, but just couldn't. Interested in the progress of the soup, I took off the lid and stuck the wooden spoon into the pot. A Russian Rata zoomed overhead. Klára ran to the wall and yelled, "Come here!" with such anger that I turned around, puzzled, to see what was wrong. With its machine gun the plane sprayed all the courtyards on the block. No one was hit. Klára said later that what made her angry was that I was always playing the hero, which was an exaggeration. Then a sizzling sound came from the fire. I looked closer: soup was running through a small hole at the bottom of the large red enamel pot. If I hadn't turned when she yelled at me, I would have got a hole, too—in my head—as I bent forward to taste the beans. It was not easy to find another pot.

Standing on the roof, Klára and I listened to the voice of the most popular actress-singer of the time—Katalin Karády. Coming from a Russian Army loudspeaker, the voice boomed, and gave the song an added, more threatening depth. With this song the Russians meant to plant fear in the dispirited hearts of the Hungarian soldiers still fighting alongside the Germans: "In vain you run, in vain. You cannot escape your fate." The Russians were in the outskirts of the city and they already held the suburb of Angyalföld. The loudspeaker was only a few blocks away. A Stalin flare howled into the sky and lit up the roofs. We stood there, holding hands, blinking in the sudden brightness. "Beautiful," Klára whispered. We laughed: why was she whispering?



"And another thing. I know how to pick out a decent cantaloupe."

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ON Christmas Day, 1944, my uncle Arnold Kobra was sitting in his easy chair, wearing his winter coat, smoking his pipe, and looking very lean and sarcastic. He was taking great pleasure in the movements of his young wife, Zsuzsa, while he entertained us with interesting stories. He kept looking at the tips of his thick shoes and at the crows on the windowsill. He was the most spectacular figure in the family: a great showman and a Freemason. Picture a sixty-year-old gentleman with barely graying hair. If he were to appear right now, he would probably be wearing a cashmere topcoat, his felt hat in his hand, without scarf or tie, the collar of his white shirt open. But in that Bauhaus-style apartment on Pozsonyi Road, with the seventy-nine, then fewer, fellow-tenants and the broken windows, Arnold wrapped a wool scarf over his cashmere coat. The corner of the room had been hit by a bomb, but it would have been beneath Arnold to attribute any special importance to a gaping hole. He gathered the children around him, to tell them about the round-the-world adventures of a cabaret dancer, and about the Middle East and the Far East. "She must have been his mistress, too," whispered Klára, whose father did not always take notice of her remarks. "Papa was quite debauched," she said. "Tell me, Papa, why did you have to have so many women?"

"You know, my dear, when we get undressed everything is discovered. Maybe that's what we want—discovery."

Klára gave him a dark look. "And what is this 'everything' that gets discovered? You men have one thing sticking out down below, and we women have two things sticking out on top. That's not terribly interesting."

Uncle Arnold disagreed. "Man seeks moments of truth, and sometimes finds them in bed with a stranger who turns out to be not such a stranger after all. The Bible also tells you to love thy neighbor as thyself. This is best done in bed."

"And what about fornication?" Klára demanded. "When you cheat on Mama, that's called fornication, isn't it? Did you cheat on her?"

"No."

"Never?"

"Never."

"Why not?"

"Because."

"What about your other wives? Did you cheat on them?"

"Yes."

"Why?"

"Because I felt like it."

"And you didn't feel like cheating on Mama?"

"No, I didn't."

"Why, dear Papa?"

"Because it was with Mama that I was unfaithful to all the other women."

Uncle Arnold: an elderly gentleman lying on a muddy light-pink marble floor, with a steady stream of blood flowing from his forehead into the sockets of his eyes. If he were sitting here now, he would tell me, "My dear nephew, I haven't had an opportunity to thank you for what you did for me. It was your display of resistance, you know, that made that young man shoot me in the head. I also see some connection between your slamming the door in that Arrow-Cross man's face and the fact that Zsuzsa later threw herself from the balcony, from the same balcony where I last kissed her.

"What had happened up to January, 1945, was quite enough for me. When it's clear I'm not wanted I don't cling to the doorknob. I thought I was a hospitable citizen. My innkeeper ancestors, too, leaned on the counters of their respective establishments, waiting to see whether the cops or the robbers would come in. Let them all come in; everybody has to eat, drink, rest, and have a little fun. A good inn is a valuable thing. But they called me a harmful Jewish capitalist. Who are they? The ones who hated my kind from the start, and now invented some humbug theory to go with their hatred. Some of them hated the Jew in me more than the capitalist, and some vice versa. And I was also harmful because I corrupted people's morals: besides my hotel, the Crown, I maintained a night club, and a reputable private meeting place for couples in the city. I worked on the premise that people need food, lodging, entertainment, and sex. And with a verve characteristic of Budapest and my own kindly brand of misanthropy, I set about providing all this at reasonable prices.

Victoria Roberts

"We're giving her my name and his name, but we're not going to hyphenate."

"Why, you ask, was I a hotelier in Budapest? Why not a fur trader in China, or a shaman in Senegal? What does a people who depend so much on personal hospitality have to do with the industry of hospitality? Perhaps I wanted to encourage hospitality in our fellow-citizens by providing them with a saloon, a cabaret, and a winter garden. A hotel is civilization itself, don't you think? Meanwhile, in increasingly unfriendly tones, I was given to understand that I was no more than a guest myself, a guest whose presence was becoming more and more intolerable. To stand one's ground or to flee, that was the question. Too late, I realized that to flee was to stand one's ground: our business is to stay alive, along with our families.

"My life was not in danger; I would just keep on doing what I had been doing. Thus did I fool myself, too lazy and too proud to run away or to help the rest of you run away. I didn't even go out to do the shopping; I just sat in my armchair and loathed mankind. It's a comic sort of end, isn't it—getting shot down like a stray dog? I was not prepared. Since then I have had time to wonder what would have happened if that young man hadn't got so angry with me, if he had spared me my declining years. Even old age has its sweet moments.

"We should have got out in time. My instinct was always to make myself scarce when tempers rose and melodramas brewed. In 1939, I called Zsuzsa from Paris and asked her and Klára to join me. I wanted to go into the entertainment industry in Rio. But Zsuzsa said I should come home, Paris was no safer than Budapest. We had a beautiful autumn that year; we took walks in the hills of Buda. On all of Mt. Hármashatár there wasn't a man more in love than I.

"I suppose I disappeared from Zsuzsa's life at the best possible time. I had never known anyone more beautiful. She had an ironical yet warm expression. The jet-black wavy hair above her high forehead was made more interesting by the few strands of gray. Her manner was distant, somewhat capricious. Good taste surrounded her from head to toe. Zsuzsa did have other loves after me. What she received from them must have been different from what I gave her. Far better, and more elegant, to abandon Zsuzsa when I was a sixty-year-old, still-trim gentleman than to remain by her side and turn into a toothless, potbellied fool."

Central
MALL
-IF YOU SHOPPED HERE YOU WOULD BE CONSUMING BY NOW
WMiller

"HERE everything will be exactly as you wish it," Arnold told Zsuzsa when he first carried her into this apartment with its roof terrace. He got down on his knees and kissed her foot, begging forgiveness in advance for all the sins he was going to commit. Zsuzsa decorated the studio in her own way, with shiny black reflecting surfaces and large lamps in the shape of metal bowls, which scattered the light across the ceiling. And, of course, there were chrome-tube chairs with raw-leather strap seats. In her bedroom, ascetic, sharp angles and geometrical abstractions awaited Arnold's Art Nouveau virility.

She wore knee-socks and tartan skirts, read books on psychology and sociology, was interested in the architecture of apartment buildings and in the history of clothes. She had her hair clipped short, was friendly with leftist poets who thought that Arnold, thirty years her senior, was a peculiar sort of prehistoric creature. But they were glad to see him whenever he joined them, and even gladder when he invited everyone to his place. His own apartment was located on the fourth floor of the building behind the hotel. Arnold surrounded himself with old objects, all lovingly handmade, most of which sent shivers down Zsuzsa's spine. He would sit in the living room, by the tile stove, in his rocking chair, his feet on an upholstered stool as he designed unprecedented lighting effects for his next show. He had started many things; he had failed at many things.

When he was cheerful, he needed the cabaret and the sound of clinking glasses. Passing through the several halls of his hotel, he would dispense his little jokes. In the bar, the dancer would put her head on the lapel of his shiny tuxedo, and he would sink his fingers into the girl's curly hair. Arnold liked to watch women come through the revolving door, survey the place as they fluttered the wings of their coats, and then move to the bar. The fragrant newcomer is already awaited by a carefully trimmed mustache. With a barely audible clicking of the heels, the gentleman rises, kisses the lady's hand, and takes her coat to the cloakroom. Arnold nods with sympathy. It will not be easy for the mustached gentleman to listen to the lady's chatter as he holds her hand in a public place like the Crown. The lady must be a recent divorcée now looking for a witty companion who will boldly ring her doorbell, take her to dinner after the theatre, and make a good appearance anywhere. The gentleman with the mustache knows how to make a good appearance, but senses, with trepidation, that he will be unable to leave the lady's apartment, full of china and antique weapons, before three in the morning. His wife will not say a word. With slightly trembling shoulders she will cry in the kitchen while she makes coffee. The husband, leaning against the doorjamb, will watch his wife's wrinkled elbows. He, too, will have a lump in his throat. Arnold nods; he knows all this in advance.

What Arnold liked best in life was to play with his hotel and his night club. For this he needed a lot of free time from Zsuzsa, but didn't want her to be unfaithful to him. In his night club, women fell across the table with laughter, Army officers couldn't hold back the tears behind their monocles. The Crown was the city's most popular spot. Once Zsuzsa burst out, "For you, the worst trash is all right if it provides a laugh!" She lowered her eyes when he told the maid, "Please bring me my cigar box." It contained cash. Through Zsuzsa he made handsome donations to the glee clubs of the workers' movement. If the money was used for secret activities instead, that was not his business. He was more interested in eccentrics, in luxury and inspired madness, than in good causes, but with his left hand he also gave the more enduring forms of culture their due.

Having grown up during the time of the most extensive construction in Budapest, when suddenly this obscure Central European city emerged as a metropolis, Arnold knew the old names of the streets, and knew the people who used to occupy the single-story neoclassical commercial buildings that were torn down at the end of the last century to make room for six-story luxury apartments. He liked to talk about the auto races he saw at the beginning of the century, and about the eight-oared boats and how he had been a coxswain in one of them. He was a conscientious citizen, secure in his status, equal before and protected by the law of the land: it was not race but achievement that counted; it was who had contributed what to the city.

Above her bed Zsuzsa had a photograph of her husband: the young Arnold among country people in wine-festival season. Wearing white pants, sitting with legs crossed, he is dreamily holding his glass. People appear to be talking to him, but it's not certain that he hears them. Sometimes Zsuzsa would pour out her complaints in sharp words. He would nod, nod, then sigh. "Instead of this hard-to-please queen of the night, I could have picked some meek housewife to live with, and talked whatever nonsense I chose." Bareheaded, wearing a black coat, he would drink champagne on his wife's roof terrace, which was covered with soft snow.

"The whole city is frivolous and rotten," said Zsuzsa, "and you are one of the high priests of frivolity." And she rested her head against her husband's chest.

The café was Arnold's natural ambience; he lent his name and style to the place. But when he felt depressed he would take to the hills. Wearing hiking boots and a leather jacket, and carrying a knapsack, he would go off by himself, unable to bear the company of anyone. And when the scene around him became too familiar, and he could *tell* what was in the head of every author sitting in his café, he would put on his brown jacket, his checkered topcoat, and his thick-soled shoes, and step out of the revolving door of his hotel, his destination Málaga, where in paved courtyards beside beautiful fountains he would enjoy himself with Spanish women of questionable character. He loved many a woman precisely because her character was questionable. "A woman without deceit and designs is like a lily of the valley without its fragrance." He would come back slightly thinner but looking better, and in a more accommodating mood.

ARNOLD spent his last days sitting in his armchair and talking like a man whose train was about to leave. He had escaped from the brick factory in whose enormous drying hall he and hundreds of other men were made to stand in mud. He had come home to his wife, was now holding her hand, and Klára and I were standing by him, listening to his words. The high priest of frivolity grew sombre during those last days. That was the time of rumors about the gassing of those who had been deported, the time when the word "Auschwitz" began to arise in conversation. I looked around the room, in which only one memorial candle was burning. Was there a deeper meaning to the evil that had befallen us? I could see none. Those who had murdered half the people from the apartment had no reason but stupidity. They went about shouting and shooting, showing off. I tried to imagine the Russian soldiers. They would come, running from house to house, always covering themselves. I would go downstairs to meet them. One of the soldiers would pick the yellow star off my chest. Why should I wait? Why not remove the star now? The moment I asked myself this question, I made up my mind. With a nail scissors I cut the stars from both my jacket and my coat. First I thought of burning them, then decided to put them into the Bible my grandfather had given me. "I'm not wearing it anymore," I told Arnold. "You know what you're doing," Arnold replied.

"You ask me why I don't fight them?" Arnold looked out the window as if enlisting the support of the cloudy sky. "The people around us have become accustomed to the idea that we should not be alive. One can return the fire, yes. But I would find it difficult to shoot a man who could be mad or simply an imbecile. You can say, of course, that it makes no difference. I don't believe in the existence of monsters; there are only imbeciles, and private imbeciles can easily become public imbeciles. They ape every stupidity they hear. They are malleable, like wax. Their heads are full of advertising slogans, propaganda, lies. They are drugged with pills of hate; they are addicted and feel lost if there is nothing to hate. Or to worship. And both are deceptive emotions—a person who worships something does not know what love is, and a person who hates has no conception of anger. The difference between hate and anger is that hate does not see the human being in the enemy, whereas anger does. But some of my contemporaries have swallowed so many hate pills that they'll be able to calm down only when dirt fills their skulls.

"And this Hitler, with his 'folk community'! The Germans are incapable of loving themselves, so they try hysterically to love themselves by hating others. And here, right on our main square, we have the statue of a janitor with a machine gun. This figure will stay with you, children. The little

A.M. FOG

Night's afterbirth, last dream before waking,
Holding on with dissolving hands,
Out of it came not a line of old men
But pairs of headlights, deferring morning.

It felt like tears, like wetted bedsheets,
And suspended in it like a medicine
In vapor was the ocean's presence, ghost
Of deep water and the bite of salt.

Here you found your body again,
The hand before your face and the face it touched,
Eyes floating, feet on invisible ground,
Vagueness like another skin.

Sent out into it anyway, because it was morning,
To taste it, touch blind hardness
Like marble ruins, and skirt the edges,
Razors in goose down, hydrants' fists.

Abruptly out of it, waves appeared,
Transmuted from hanging silver ore, crafted
Before the eyes into curving metals
That broke into soup scum, Queen Anne's lace.

• •

Out of a great nothing, a theology.
Out of the amorphous, an edgeless body
Or one like a hunting mass of tendrils
That hurried down the sand, moved by hunger.

I remember a gang of friends
Racing a fog bank's onslaught along the beach.
Seal-slick, warm from the sun
This thing would eat, they ran laughing.

The fog came on. And they were beautiful,
The three boys and one girl, still in her wetsuit,
And the dissolution overtaking them,
Their stridency, full of faith, still audible.

All morning bathed in a dovelike brooding.
The fog satisfied itself by overwhelming
The meagre dew, watering the shut doors
Of snails, the leeward mold, and held still.

And then near noon there was a concentration
As if the sky tried to find a slippery word
Or remember—*that's right*—remember
Where it was in an unfamiliar bedroom.

And knew. And switched the light on. Wide awake.
—MARK JARMAN

• •

people, the ordinary people, don't consider their acts to be crimes. It is these little people that the big scoundrels appeal to. They are now allowed to shoot any Jew on the street. Just as they were allowed to shoot sparrows with their slingshots when they were children. Throw in the possibility of a little looting, make this whole package a kind of victory or hunting trophy, or make the killing and robbing a patriotic deed for them, and in some personal calendars these days will be red-letter days, and will be always remembered as such. So take advantage of the little time left—you can still kill that Jew on the street corner with impunity. If his coat is better than yours, well, take it. Jew coats are good coats. First he hands it over, then you shoot him. Come spring, these armbanded little people will be the same nobodies they were originally.

"It won't be easy for Hungary. By all indications, our small nation is not strong enough to be independent. It has belonged to the Germans until now; the Russians will have it soon. The Allies are too far away. The Russians, not the English, got here first. As for me, politically I'm an Anglophile. The Russians I prefer only when it comes to literature. But what can you do, they got here first. Even in the First World War the czarist generals wanted to come here—and now, with a slight delay, the Red Army has finally made it. Don't think they've come such a long way just to turn around and leave.

"For the Germans I was a Jew, for the Russians I'll be a bourgeois. There was plenty of laughter in the hotel where I welcomed my guests, who came to eat, sleep, and make merry. But my entertainments were too pungent to be tolerated. For both Germans and Russians I am too cynical."

"I should be a revolutionary," I said to my uncle. "My father was a good citizen, and where is he now? Why do we all have to be so helpless?"

"If you become a revolutionary, you'll be able to shoot people," Arnold replied, "first one, then another, and maybe a third. And, because you are a revolutionary, you'll have to applaud those shootings. Revolutionaries of all stripes feel entitled to execute their enemies. Nationalist and Communist revolutionaries have learned from each other, for example, that it is permissible to shoot civilians. Where civilians have to fear organized, armed people, there is no civilization. It doesn't matter what the man with the weapon says; the main thing is that he should not be able to shoot at will. Around here, soldiers have always had too much liberty. Among Jewish capitalists you may find corruption, but never terror. It is not healthy for a Jew to be in a country where at the head of a united people stands a leader who cannot lawfully be removed.

"I've always thought of politics as a circus," Arnold went on to say. "In the ring the clowns kick each other in the rear, brawl and quarrel and throw things, while we munch on pretzels and drink raspberry juice. Then we go home and don't think about the circus for a long time. But the situation changes when the circus gates are locked, the cages are opened, and the lion is set free to run into the audience. Then the tamer with his whip is truly the ringmaster. Someone from the audience protests. 'Let us out of here!' The lion tamer cracks his whip, and the lion mauls the protester to death. When I find myself in such close quarters with politics, the laughter freezes on my lips.

"Life will be good here only when you don't have to think about politics because it cannot harm you, physically or otherwise. If the premier doesn't interfere with me, I won't interfere with him. If he doesn't like my jokes, let him make some of his own. In my night club I offered the kind of shows my audience and I liked. Then one day I was summoned to the premier's office. The devil got into me, and I said: 'Gentlemen, I confess I read about your political jockeying the way I read the race results in the newspaper. And I wouldn't mind betting on politicians, either, if there were a great horse like My Treasure among your excellencies. Why don't you treat my shows the same way, like horse racing? If you think my jugglers, dancers, and comedians are winners, please come—pay your admission, have a bite, have a drink. If you like what you see, come again. And if you don't—well, no harm done. The worst that can happen is that we won't see each other again.' A young man who had seemed pleasant enough throughout the interview asked me if my words contained a veiled insult to His Excellency the premier. 'What I said was only a parable, not intended as an insult to the dignity of His Excellency,' I replied, looking into the air.

"Just before the First World War,

my dear children, things began to look up; life had great variety to it. But the generals didn't want that life. They put us in uniforms and said, 'This isn't a whorehouse, Mr. Volunteer; this is a trench.' And I was supposed to fire at Russians, Romanians, and Serbians—all of them our neighbors. What an idiot that Franz Josef was! Why would anyone in his right mind go around shooting his neighbors? And what was this 'Mr. Volunteer' business? Volunteer, my foot. If Mr. Volunteer doesn't march into the machine-gun fire and be a hero, we blindfold him and stand him before a firing squad. The world is all right when you can say the most impudent things around the café table; when the neighboring tables can exchange witty insults but sweet peace reigns; and when the great ballerina sweeps by the guests and it's only the woman at the cash register who turns green with envy.

"I tried to enliven our capital city with a little humor. Without the poems written at my marble tables, Hungarian poetry would have been poorer. I gave to the blind and orphans in general, and to the Jewish blind and orphans in particular. That's what a bourgeois citizen is for—to give what he can, and to the causes he likes. I even gave to poets and painters when they had talent but not two coins to rub together. Yes, some hated me—those who had neither money nor talent. By giving them nothing, I insulted them. Unfortunately, the bad poets were in the majority, and they took their revenge. They became journalists, and at their papers' expense they came to see my shows, and then they denounced me in their reviews. They loved my girls and the way they danced almost completely naked, lit from below the revolving glass stage, but in the papers I was accused of pornography. The reviewers roared at my jokes, then declared them offensive to the regent of the country."

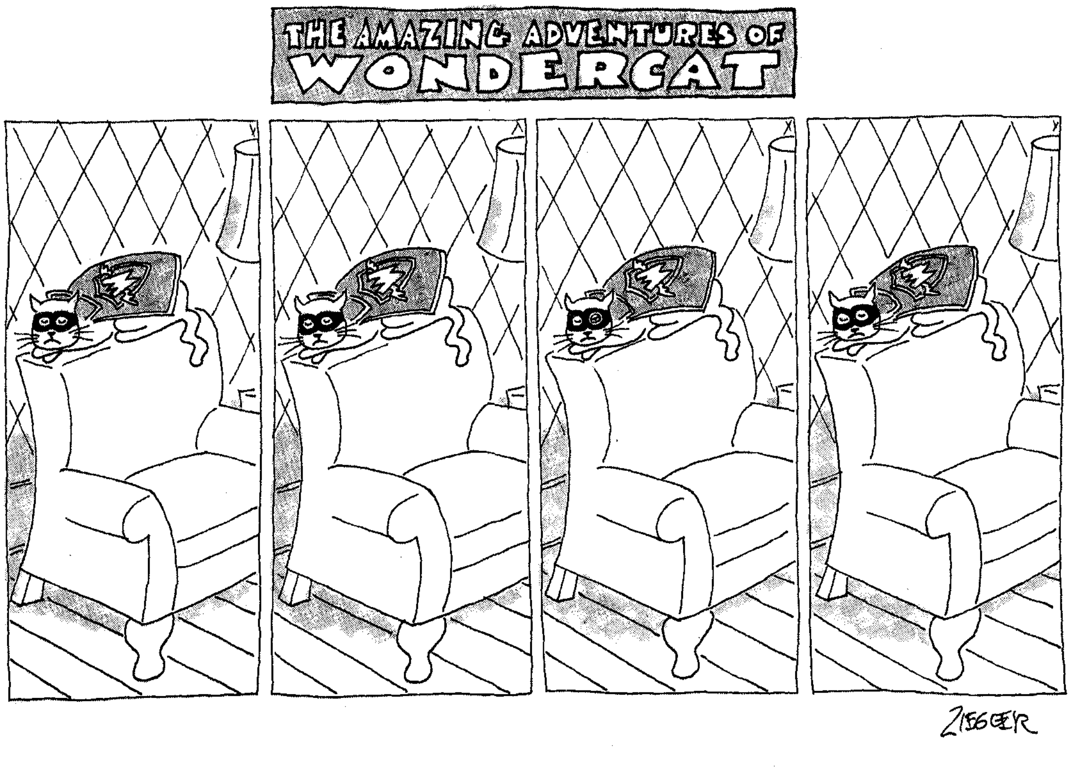
Arnold Kobra got out of his chair and went to the window. He pointed. "That was my hotel. Now it is a house of torture. What can you do when such idiots are turned loose? They give our words a background of machine-gun fire. There is no connection whatever between our behavior and our being shot, and pushed into the Danube. They shoot those who resist and those who don't."

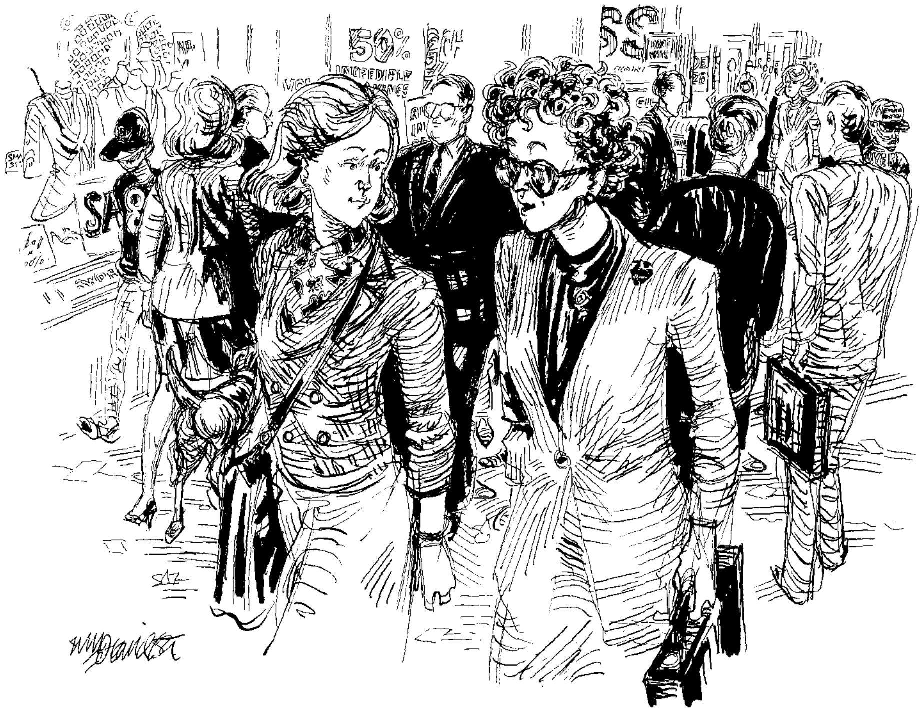
"Mostly those who don't," I put in.

"You can learn something from all this," Arnold said, "and the next chapter will be yours. I wonder what you'll do with your dual status as Jew and citizen. Will you try to scratch the Jewishness off like a scab? Will you try to be one or the other, or neither? The God of our fathers has now shown us his other face. He gives us life, but he gives us death, too. At times he does this in the right proportion, bringing death to old people. But when he brings it indiscriminately, wholesale, to children—well, I can't go along with that. I remain a God-fearing man, but I still say that God wasn't paying attention."

WE had an unexpected visitor in the protected house: our old governess, Nene. She brought a small oval-shaped medallion on a chain. It was a figure of Mary. Nene asked us to wear it. We *should* convert to Catholicism, she said. If we did that, or at least declared our intention to do that, she would take us to a convent where converted Jewish children were being hidden. We thanked Nene for her offer but declined. To remember her friendship, however, we did accept the medallion of Mary, even though we wouldn't wear it.

We conferred, and decided that if we were taken away with a group of other people from the building—which would mean being shot on the banks of the Danube—then at the edge of the nearby park we would throw down our backpacks and run, each in a different direction. Even if they fired at us, some of us would get away; the guards would not leave the column of hundreds of Jews to pursue a few children. The following day we almost had the chance to put our plan into action. At dawn, five Arrow-Cross men and a policeman broke into our room, yelling at us to get dressed, turn over all our weapons, including kitchen knives and pocketknives, and everything of value, then line up on the sidewalk in front of the building. There was a rabbi with them. He urged us to obey, saying that that was the wisest thing to do, that we should surrender all our valuables—our necklaces, heirlooms, even wedding rings. Pulling on my socks slowly, I could see Rebenyák's red cap downstairs, already out front. Rebenyák was the bad boy of the building; he had wanted to join our group, but we wouldn't accept him.





"I know what you're facing. My Ted was previously owned, too."

We looked at one another, wondering whether the time had come to carry out our plan, and whether to let Rebenyák in on it. Just then, two more men arrived. One was wearing a policeman's uniform, the other a German officer's. They, too, yelled, but not at us—at the Arrow-Cross men and their police escort. They ordered everyone back inside. Perhaps these two were Communists in disguise, or Jewish actors. In any case, they played their roles far better than the "rabbi" had played his. There we were again, upstairs in our room, sitting in our coats, confused by the turn of events.

IN the street, the day after New Year's, a barricade of cobblestones was growing higher. Uncle Arnold was ordered outside to carry stones along with other old Jewish men; the younger men had long since been taken away. Rows of cobblestones, six deep: such a formidable wall! Surely the T-34 tanks that had come all the way from Stalingrad would be stopped by these few pebbles. From their building's entrance the children watched the old men, who were bent over in the freezing cold as they labored with hammers and fire irons to separate the stones stuck together with pitch, and then carried them to add to the puny obstruction in the middle of the street. Young men in hunting boots, black pants, and green shirts supervised the work, pressed the old men to move faster. One of the young fellows had a fancy whip, like a hansom driver's, and with it he would hit the old Jews in the neck. There was no denying that they could have worked faster. It must have been the young man with the whip who outraged an elderly gentleman from the building next door, where Christians lived. It does happen that the old will side with the old, even across religious barriers. The elderly gentleman produced a shotgun, fired, and wounded the young man. The Arrow-Cross men thought it was a Jew who did this. What else could they have thought? They began to shoot wildly in all directions. The twenty barricade builders scattered, ran for cover; Arnold left, too, but he walked rather than ran so as not to draw attention to himself.

At the main entrance to the apartment building only I still stood; the other children and the adult doorkeeper on duty, a very old Jew, had run upstairs at the first sound of gunfire. I opened the heavy boarded-up door, and Arnold jumped inside. I tried to shut and lock the door before it could be forced open by the tall, armbanded young man following Arnold. Two pushed from the inside—an eleven-year-old and a sixty-year-old—but the young man won, sticking the tip of his boot in the crack of the door. He stood before us, his pistol drawn. He was taller than Arnold, and his lips were quivering with injured dignity: these Jews would slam the door in his face, just like that? A faint smile from Arnold, the smile of the loser. The young man put his pistol to Arnold's temple and pulled the trigger. Arnold fell, and the blood from his head flowed across the dirty, pink fake-marble stone of the lobby.

The young man now took aim at the child. I did not understand—would this, then, be death? More in wonder than in fear, I stared into the tall man's face. The man's anger subsided; he lowered his pistol. After all, it was only a child. Magnanimity got the better of him. He left.

ON the night of January 17, 1945, we watched one Russian tank and then another roll over the barricade the old men had built. The German soldiers, who had been lying behind the barricade clutching their machine guns, fled to the park. That night we slept not on the floor of the living room but in the hallway, farther from the fighting, and we kept sneaking to the window to peek out. In the light of the Katyusha rockets we saw scenes out of the newsreels, but this time close up and without the customary frame of the movie screen. And once again we sang the "Internationale." Aunt Márta, a Communist, had taught us the song, and told us that we, too, should be Communists, because that was the only party that had been outlawed; all the rest, simply in being legal, had collaborated in some degree with the authorities. "Learn Russian, children; you'll need it," she said. Later, in 1949, in the same ski boots she had worn through the winter of the city's siege, Aunt Márta tried to flee across the frontier. The Communist border guards fired a few warning shots, one of which hit her. She died in the hospital. But on that night in 1945 we did not fall asleep until four in the morning. We drifted off knowing that we would wake up liberated.

—GEORGE KONRÁD

(*Translated, from the Hungarian, by Imre Goldstein.*)

REFLECTIONS

WHAT'S ON?

7 A.M.: "Whenever you have a cold, you do not have to worry about reinfecting yourself when you use that lip balm." That's Beverly, who leads Christian calisthenics on Channel 116, FamilyNet. "If you used someone else's that has a cold, their lip balm, then I could see that the germs would infect you. But when it's your very own lip balm your body will build up an immunity." *So much happens* between seven and eight in the morning on the ninety-three channels of the Fairfax County, Virginia, cable system, one of the largest in the world.

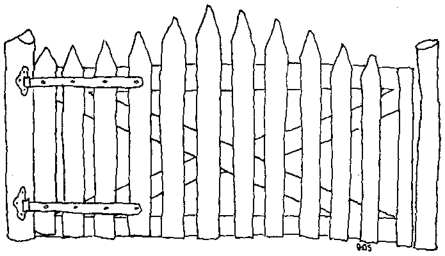
On "Good Morning America," Joel, the movie critic, says, "A little piece of information that I learned about Shakespeare's England—the cure that actors used for a sore throat in Shakespeare's England. They would take a live frog—yes, they would—and hold the frog by its foot into their mouths. They figured that would keep the juices flowing, which I'm sure it did. And that's where our saying comes from, 'A frog in his throat.' " Since seaweed grows in "the nutrient-rich ocean," it comes as no surprise to anyone in the Anushka cosmetics organization that it attacks and destroys cellulite. An Amtrak train has gone off the rails in Indiana, according to CNN, and American companies will now be allowed to sell laptop computers in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. Kevin Johnson, of the Phoenix Suns, so racked with the flu that he had to be fed intravenously, nonetheless tallied twenty-nine points and twelve assists in last night's game. Meanwhile, a robot surgeon has successfully replaced a dog's arthritic hip with an artificial joint.

On the Fox affiliate, a cartoon Mr. Wilson is *sure* that that's Dennis (the Menace) in the gorilla suit, so he uses a pair of pliers on its snout; entertainingly, however, it's an actual gorilla, escaped from the zoo. The Infiniti Q45 goes from zero to sixty in 6.9 seconds: " 'Wow' is an involuntary reaction of pure pleasure." Type A personalities are five times as likely to have a *second* heart attack, according to Otto Wahl, an associate professor of psychology at George Mason University. Following vertical roasting on the Spanek Vertical Roaster, a chicken can be—is!—carved with a carrot.

In Czechoslovakia, Ambassador Rita Klimova says in a speech on C-SPAN, the newly emerging democracy has spawned dozens of political parties, including one for beer drinkers. "Sesame Street" is brought to you this morning by "L," "S," and "6." Only eleven per cent of Americans feel that the penny should be banned. Mr. Wizard is ripping apart fireworks to get at the chemicals inside. "Finally, one of my favorites—strontium chloride," he exults. In Japan, an exchange has opened to trade memberships in golf clubs as if they were stocks—the memberships are already accepted as collateral by banks. Margie Grant now uses Dove soap: "I had this revelation. I thought, you know, it's about time for me to start paying more attention to my face, my skin. . . . 'Cause you just don't realize how quickly time passes."

The *Travel Channel provides* the Lisbon forecast (high of 77°) and then a documentary about Austria, a country you may encounter "on far shores of the world, wherever humanity is striving to improve the quality of life." For instance, "Airport passengers in Los Angeles may be driven to the terminal by airport buses made in Austria." The Hobel, a machine from nearby Germany, is featured on "Breakthrough." It transforms food preparation from a tedious routine into an exciting event, and is top-rack dishwasher safe. Precision-minted pewter medallions celebrating former President Reagan are available for ten dollars on the Nashville Network. "Tums tastes like chalk," an ex-Tums user proclaims. On "McHale's Navy," all leaves have been cancelled until the annoying enemy pilot Washing-Machine Charlie can be silenced, much to McHale's disgust. ("If he's a menace, I'm a ring-tailed gooney bird.") Hans, a Dutch national, prepares a creamy Gouda sauce to drizzle over cauliflower for the A&E audience.

A harrowing documentary on the Howard University station describes the British genocide of Tasmanian aborigines, right down to the last woman, whose skeleton hung for several decades in a museum at Oxford University. Richard Simmons introduces his brother, who used to weigh two hundred and five pounds: "Here I was, only forty-two, and I felt fifty-two, maybe sixty-two." There's terrible flooding in Texas and Oklahoma; on the "Today" show, a woman is plucked off the roof of her submerged car by a helicopter. Richard Nixon tells Bryant Gumbel that, while it's true his resignation from the Presidency will continue to cloud his record, "the main point is to live life to the hilt, all the time you possibly can, and to continue to give it your best shot, so that you'll have no regrets." Owning a firearm is a deeply personal decision, says a young woman in a checked suit appearing on behalf of the National Rifle Association. "Whistle at me, will you, you shirttail cousin to a piccolo!" exclaims Wally Gator, "the swinging navigator in the swamp." A preacher is explaining something on the Inspirational Network. "As long as *you're* holding on to cash, you can't do anything with it," he says. "And if God tries to give you more, what happens?" He demonstrates: the bills bounce off your closed fist and fall to the floor. On "CBS This Morning," a "controversial Milwaukee alderman" says that unless a hundred-million-dollar job-training program is created soon, blacks there will undertake "revolutionary violence that will be committed against the city of Milwaukee." The newly released hostage Frank Reed declares from his hospital balcony that he is looking forward to a three-pound Maine lobster. A man named Delvin Miller has been harness racing over the course of eight decades, except for a stretch during the Second World War, when he trained mules to deliver supplies in Burma for General Vinegar Joe Stilwell. The members of the singing group Wilson Phillips remark that people tell them their name makes



them sound like a law firm or a type of screwdriver.

Hamstrings work in opposition to quadriceps, according to an exercise instructor on the Lifetime Channel, who adds, "The adductor muscles are too tight in most of the population." More C.E.O.s of Fortune 500 companies were born under Taurus than under any other sign; also, age-based sizing for children's clothing is out of date, because children are larger than they were when the sizing was devised. A National Family Opinion Research survey discussed on Channel 34 found that most consumers "aren't shy about testing out beds in retail showrooms." Research from the University of Wisconsin indicates that hamburger may contain substances that inhibit skin and stomach cancer. Congressman Donald (Buz) Lukens, who was convicted of having sex with a sixteen-year-old girl, says that he made a "dumb mistake" but that he will run for reëlection anyway.

By now, it's nearly eight.

"To representation without taxation!"

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DAYBREAK: A little mist hangs above the pond, which is still, except for a single mallard paddling slowly back and forth. From time to time, it dives, sticking its rump in the air. From time to time, it climbs out on a rock and airs its wings in the breeze, which is visible now and again on the surface of the pond. I watch for about an hour, and mostly the duck just swims back and forth.

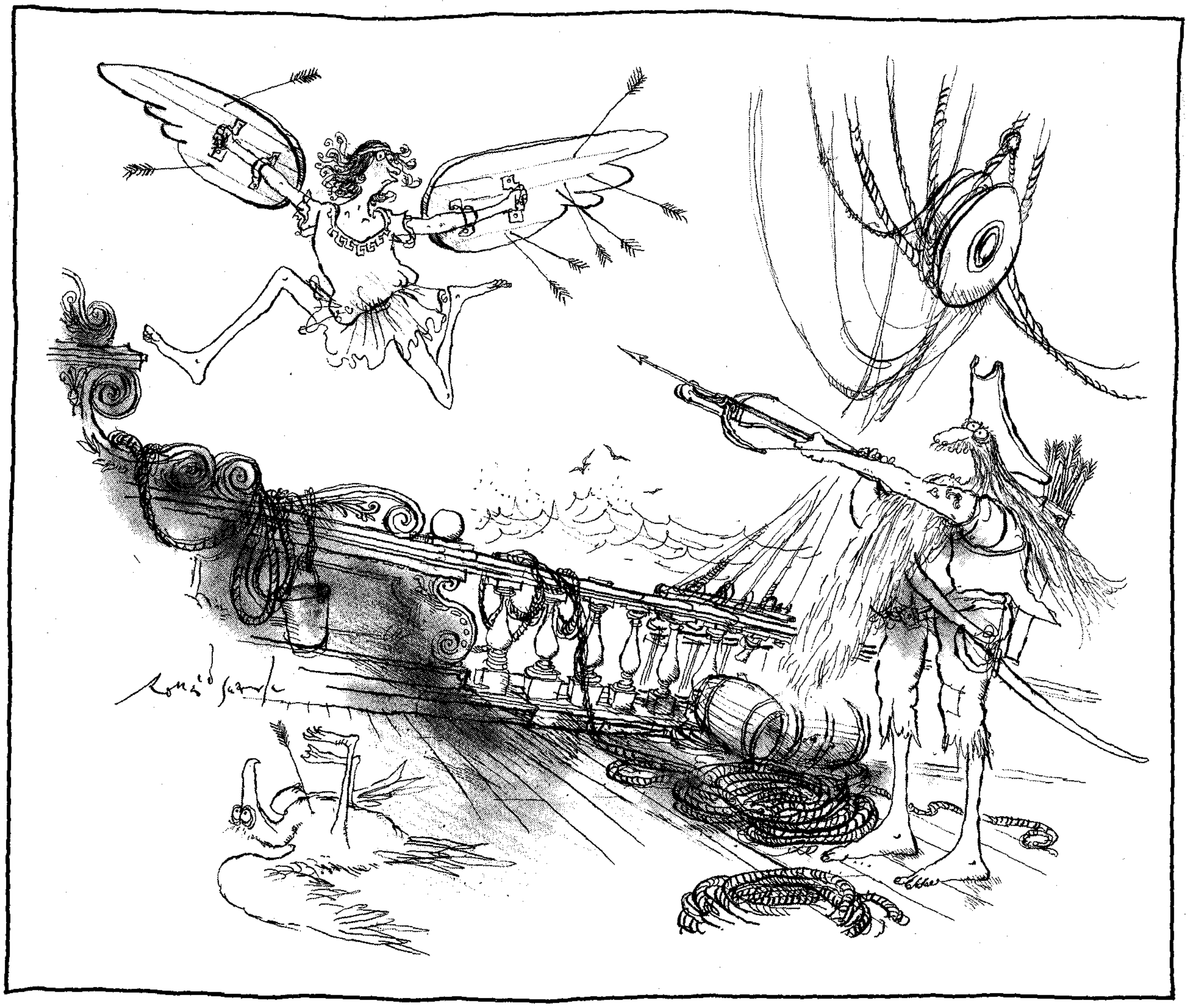
Ducks are not necessarily placid. At certain times of the year, male mallards flick water at females, or engage in what the bird books call a "grunt-whistle," while females perform "nod-swimming." At other seasons, they may pull feathers from their bodies to insulate their eggs. And ducks are peculiarly susceptible to "imprinting." If between thirteen and sixteen hours after they hatch they are exposed to a moving object—a man or a dog or an Infiniti Q45—they will thereafter follow it.

But best to be honest right from the start. On this particular morning, this particular duck is doing nothing much, just swimming slowly back and forth.

WE believe that we live in "the age of information," that there has been an information "explosion," an information "revolution." While in a certain sense this is the case, in many important ways just the opposite is true. We also live at a moment of deep ignorance, when vital knowledge that human beings have always possessed about who we are and where we live seems beyond our reach: we live in an age of missing information.

This account of that age takes the form of an experiment—a contrast between two days. One day, May 3, 1990, lasted nearly two thousand hours: I collected on videotape almost every minute of television that came across the enormous Fairfax cable system from one morning to the next. The other day, late that summer, lasted the conventional twenty-four hours. A mile from my house in the Adirondacks, camped by a small pond near the summit of a peak I'll call Crow Mountain, I awoke, took a day hike up a neighboring mountain, returned to the pond for a swim, made supper, and watched the stars till I fell asleep. I wanted to examine the information that each day imparted.

These are, of course, straw days. No one spends twenty-four hours a day watching television (though an impressive percentage of the American people give it their best shot). And almost no one spends much time alone outdoors; the hermit tradition, never strong in this country, has all but died away. (Thoreau was referred to twice on television during May 3rd. Once, he was an answer on "Tic Tac Dough," in the category "Bearded Men," and later that evening, in the back of a limousine, a man toasted his companion with champagne and said, "You remember how we've always talked about finding our Walden Pond, our own little utopia? Here it is." It was Falconcrest.) I'm not interested in deciding which of these ways of spending time is "better." Neither strikes me as a model for a full and happy life; in fact, they are both caricatures. But caricatures have their uses: they draw attention to what is important about the familiar. Our society has been moving steadily from natural sources of information toward electronic ones, from the mountain and the field toward the television. This great transition is very nearly complete. And so it may prove useful to examine the two extremes. One is the target of our drift, the other an anchor that might tug us gently back, a source of information that once spoke clearly



CROSSED PATHS

Icarus Meets the Ancient Mariner

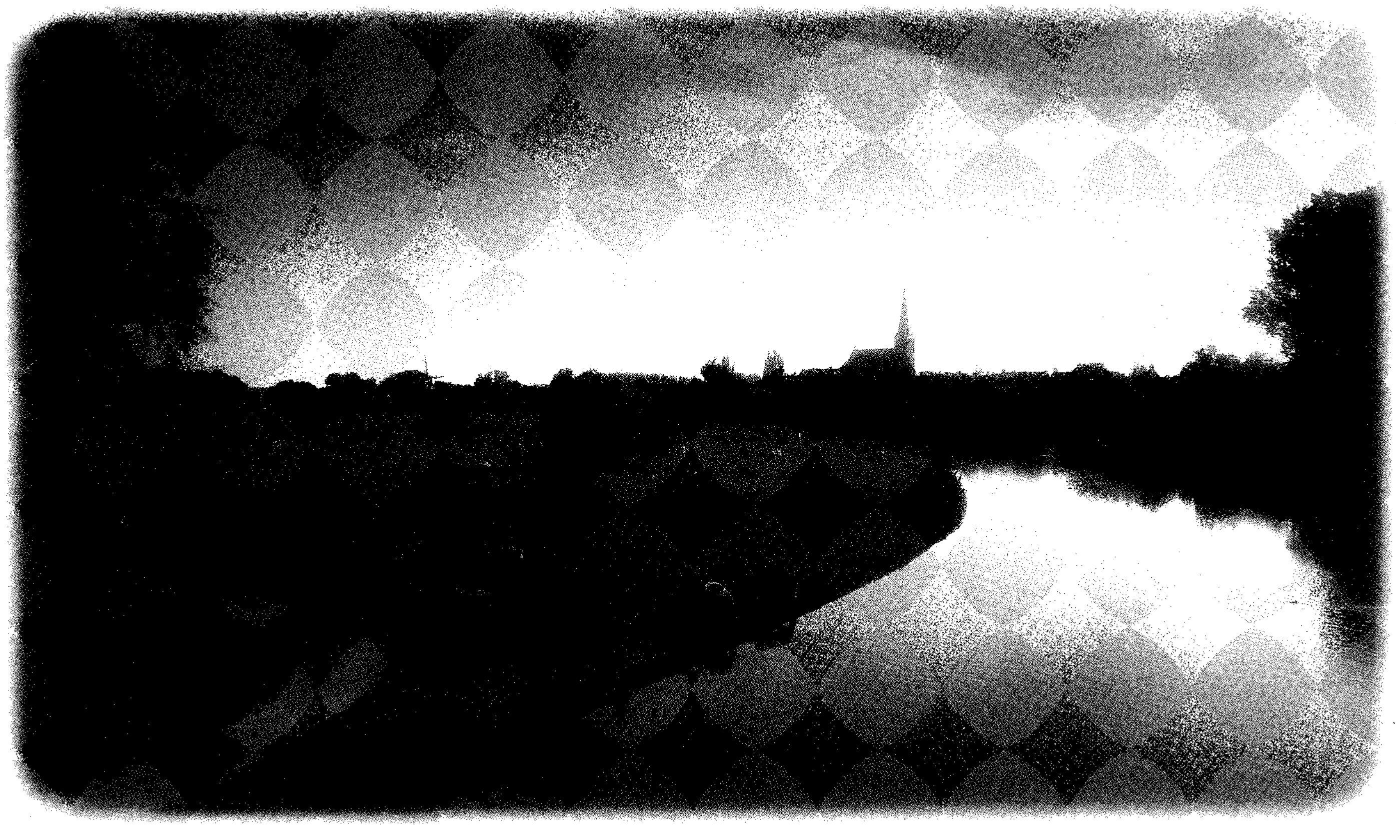
• •

to us and now hardly even whispers.

I chose Crow Mountain because I live near it. I chose Fairfax because of the size of its cable system—at the time, it was roughly forty per cent larger than its closest competitor. There were six Christian channels, four shopping channels, two country-music video channels, even a channel that broadcast all the arrival and departure information off the Dulles and National airport screens. The Fairfax cable guide listed nearly a thousand movies each month. There were two comedy channels, nine public-access and government channels, two national sports channels and a local one, two weather channels, even a unique "four in one" channel that split your screen into quarters and allowed you to watch the three major networks and PBS simultaneously.

I watched it all, more or less. Some channels featured endless scrolling text, and a few programs repeated over and over, with half-hour "infomercials" for Didi Seven stain remover and Liquid Lustre car wax leading the list by making more than a dozen appearances apiece. Having decided that once or twice was enough to mine their meanings, I would fast-forward through them. (I always slowed down, though, to enjoy the part where the car-wax guy sets fire to the hood of his car.) A few tapes—my MTV cache, for instance—were nothing but snow, so I made replacement tapes for them on a later day. Otherwise, I didn't cheat much; I dutifully spent many months of forty-hour weeks staring at things like "Outdoors Wisconsin"—the kind of show that appears on minor cable channels across the nation, because there's nowhere near enough programming produced to fill all the available time. On "Outdoors Wisconsin" ("Summer to fall, winter to spring, Green Bay to where the St. Croix sings"), they were "sucker-grabbing" in a creek near Fond du Lac. Sucker-grabbing involves wading up behind suckers, which are a variety of fish, and grabbing them. "They're really good if you grind 'em and mix 'em with a little egg and soda cracker," the host declared.

"Outdoors Wisconsin" clearly has little immediate effect on anyone except the suckers, but TV is cumulative, and over a lifetime ten minutes here and there of watching fishing or car racing or "Divorce Court" has added up to a lot of hours and had a certain effect on all of us. When people write about television—especially the critics, who have to do it regularly—they usually have no choice but to concentrate on the new and the interesting,



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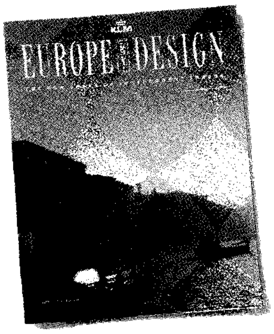
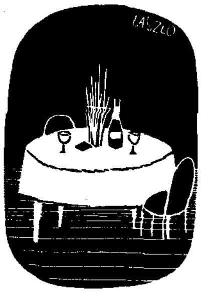


as if they were reviewing plays or films. But TV is different. The new is relatively unimportant. The most popular program in 1990, "Cheers," was in its eighth season; several weeks, it was topped in the ratings by "60 Minutes," which had been on for twenty-two years, or challenged by "Murder, She Wrote," which had turned a hardy six. Programs that were first broadcast twenty or thirty years ago are still on the air, shown more often than ever in ceaseless rerun. You could argue that "The Brady Bunch," not "Twin Peaks," is the really important show to understand, because simply by dint of repetition and familiarity it has worn its way into the culture. (In March of 1991, U.P.I. reported that a Florida police officer had pleaded guilty to battery charges. He had lined up fourteen juveniles he had caught skateboarding, and then gone down the line whacking them with a nightstick as he sang the theme from "The Brady Bunch." "He was singing that 'Brady Bunch' tune, and each time he'd say like two words he would hit one person in the butt," one of the boys told investigators.) The commercials, the filler, the reruns, the videos—all of them count. "My Three Sons" still alters people's orbits, at least a little, just as Cosby will still be a force in 2010.



I watched a great deal of television when I was growing up, in the sixties and seventies. Not the "quality TV" of television's golden era, in the nineteen-fifties—not "Playhouse 90" or "The Honeymooners." I was watching real TV. Friday night meant ABC—first "The Partridge Family," then "Room 222." TV was like a third parent—a source of information and impressions and ideas. And not such a bad parent—always with time to spare, always eager to please, often funny. TV filled dull hours, and it made me a cosmopolite at an early age. I have great affection for it. I can remember waiting eagerly for "Room 222" to come on, remember that the high school it showed (Bernie, with the groovy Afro! Karen Valentine!) seemed impossibly, enticingly sophisticated. People who didn't grow up with television tend not to understand its power; they already had a real world to compare the pictures on the screen with. People my age didn't; we were steeped in television, flavored for life. A few years ago, my wife and I moved to a mountain-rimmed valley; there's no cable, and even with a big antenna you mostly get static. Since necessity is the mother of acquiescence, TV proved a fairly easy habit to kick. But of course I hadn't escaped it—it lingered in my temperament, attitudes, outlook. And only with some distance, some time away, did I get a sense of how much. I was not some Martian suddenly confronted with television; I was a traveller returning from a long journey to a cozy home, able to see that home with new eyes. Going back to television for this account was like spending the holidays with your parents once you've grown up: in three days, you comprehend more on a conscious level about your mother than you did in twenty years of living with her.

But only in part is this account *about* television, which I don't mean to cast as an evil appliance. Often I will be describing phenomena that appear on television, but they are also on the radio and in magazines and everywhere else, because they are parts of modern life. The amount of territory that television covers in twenty-four hours is extraordinary—I could find fifty references to any topic that interested me. TV is a pipeline to the modern world, and a convenient shorthand for some of its features. Still, that does not mean that TV *merely* reflects it. By virtue of its omnipresence, TV also constantly reinforces certain ideas about the world. It is less an art form than the outlet for a utility. Like the faucet on a sink which connects you to the river, the TV links you to a ceaselessly flowing stream of information, and that very ceaselessness makes it different from a play or a movie. Television is the chief way that most of us partake of the larger world, of the information age, and so none of us completely escape its influence.

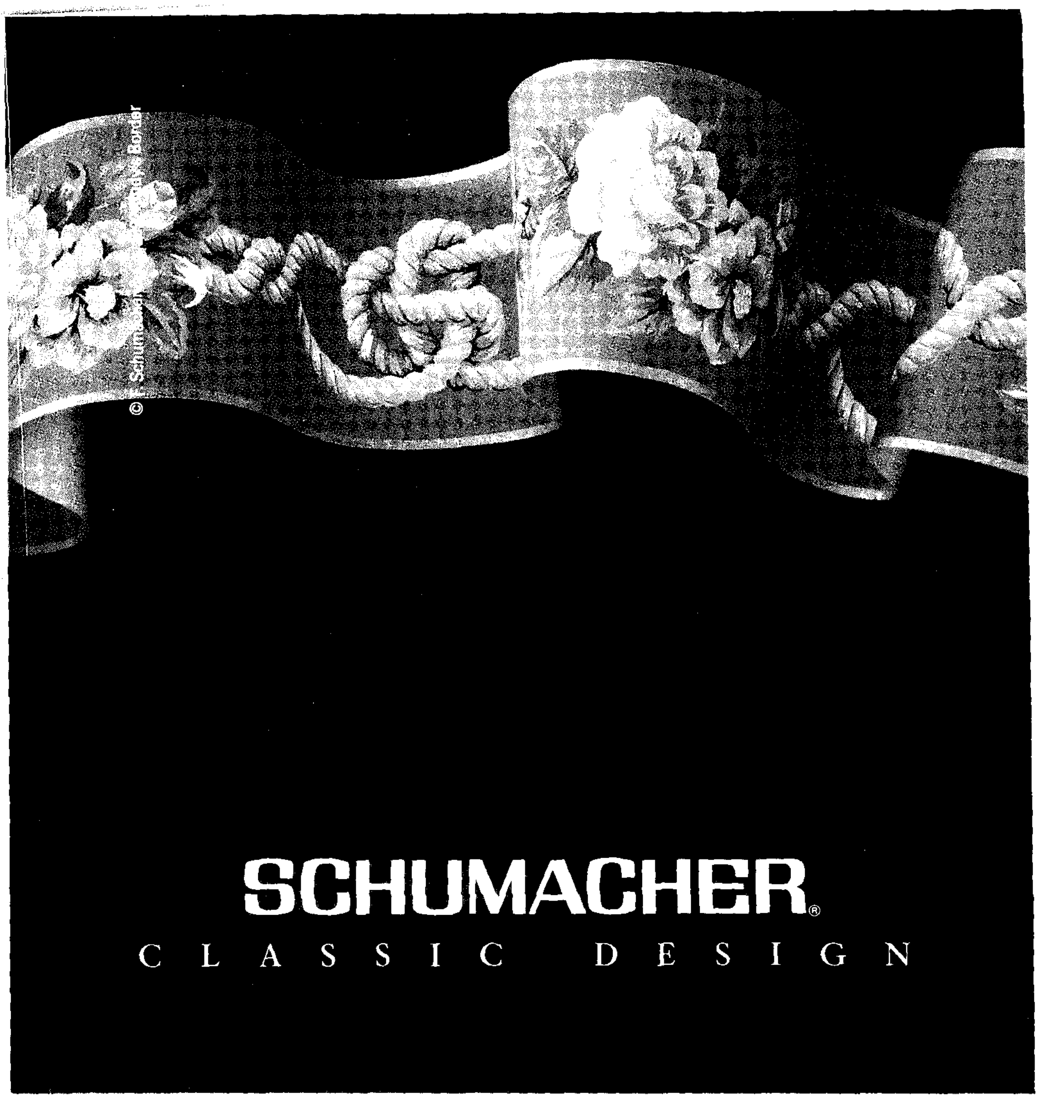
Sixty-nine per cent of the American people tell researchers they get most of their information about the world from television, and other statistics are so familiar we hardly notice them: more American homes have TVs than have plumbing, and the TVs are on an average of seven hours a day; children spend more time watching TV than doing anything else except sleeping; on weekday evenings in winter, half the American population is sitting in front of television; as many as twelve per cent of adults (that is, one in eight) feel they are physically addicted to the set, watching an average of fifty-six hours a week; and so on. The industry works hard to make this absorption seem glamorous; the Fairfax system runs an around-the-clock Cable Welcome Channel, for instance, which tells viewers how to operate their systems ("If you can't get a picture on your TV, make sure it is plugged in") and also congratulates them endlessly on "being part of a complete communications system that puts the whole world at your fingertips, from the far reaches of outer space to the heart of Fairfax." Outer space! Satellites! Fibre optics! Data! The final installment of an A&E series called "The Romantic Spirit" gushes, "Computers and satellites and silicon chips signal that we are in sight of a post-Romantic Age, of a fresh start." Communications are now "almost instantaneous," a documentary on the computer age explains. "Communications are the currency we trade in, the currency of the information age."

But what exactly is this information currency? If you're a commodities broker or a bond trader, it's a blizzard of constantly changing green numbers on a flashing screen. If you're a vice-president for marketing, it's a cataract of data about how much people earn in a certain Zip Code and what kinds of cars they drive. For most of us, though, this romantic, mind-boggling Niagara of communications washes up in our living rooms in the form of, say, Cory Everson's hunky husband, Jeff. Cory has an exercise program on ESPN called "Bodyshaping," and she has Jeff handle the show's Nutrition Corner. If you're in the supermarket, Jeff advises, and you open an egg carton and see that one of the eggs is broken, "don't buy that carton."

There's also a lot of information you didn't already have. On the Discovery Channel, for instance, Dr. Frank Field explains that in Switzerland white bread is taxed and the money is given to whole-wheat bakers, so their loaves can be competitively priced. According to Casey Kasem on "Oprah," Neil Sedaka went to the same high school as Neil Diamond and Barbra Streisand, and he later wrote a song about a girl called Carole Klein, who went on to become Carole King and to have several No. 1 records, not only for herself but for the Shirelles. Sea otters wrap themselves in kelp before going to sleep, and three thousand matings are required to produce one lion cub that will live past its second year, and hyenas usually bear twins. And the recording on the Voyager 2 space probe which offers our planet's greetings to the entire universe uses the voice of—Kurt Waldheim.

Some of the information on TV could win you fabulous prizes. "In American Literature, what Mark Twain character had a girlfriend named Becky Thatcher?" A team of contestants on "Super Sloppy Double Dare" (who had earlier recalled the name of the Flintstones' pet dinosaur) couldn't answer, and so had to turn themselves into "human tacos" by pouring vats of guacamole on their heads. On other occasions, the information is more speculative: John Osborne, in a special edition of "Prophecy Countdown" called "Angels—God's Special Space Shuttles," calculated that angels travel eleven million miles a minute, versus two hundred and eighty-three for a NASA rocket. And once in a while the information is just a shade less than honest, as when the Travel Channel claimed that "three things make Nuremberg world famous—its Christmas market, the Nuremberg gingerbread, and the Nuremberg sausages."

Most of the time, though, the information that TV has to offer is not spelled out in such tidy little factlets. It is at least partly hidden in the fabric of movies and newscasts and commercials and reruns: not so hidden that you need to hire a team of deconstruction contractors to analyze it all—just hidden enough so that the messages are passed over, absorbed through the eyes without triggering the entire brain. People used to claim that you could see "sex" written on Ritz crackers in advertisements. Despite careful examination, I never could, and that's not what I'm talking about. What interests me is what happens when you see an ad, over and over, for small Ritz crackers pre-smeared and pre-stuck together with peanut butter and sold under the slogan "No Assembly Required." In concert with a hundred other similar ads, what habits of mind and body does this help to produce? I'm not concerned that TV is decadent or shortens your attention span or leads to murder. Nor,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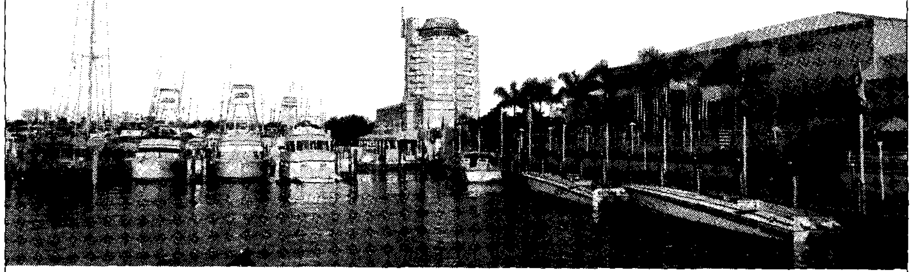

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for the purposes of this account, do I much care if TV is manipulated by giant corporations, the military-industrial complex, or "the pressure of ratings." These are important questions, but they're not my question. My question is "What's on?"

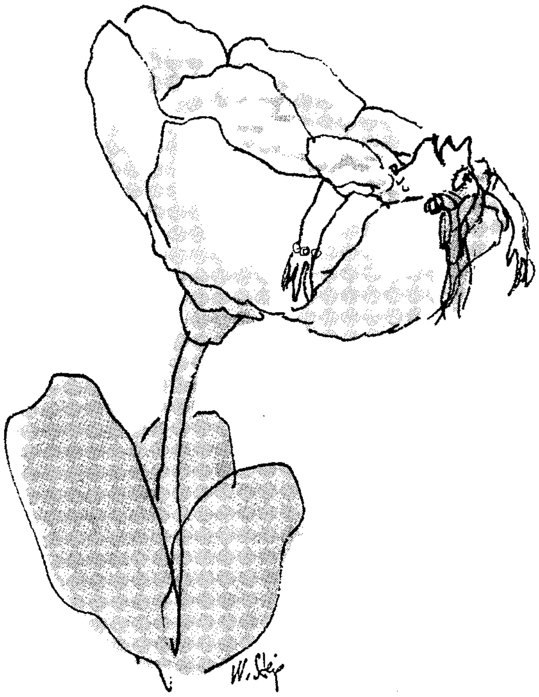
Occasionally, in between clips of Second World War footage on A&E, a man named Jack Perkins emerged to say that his network shows "the entire scope of television, which is, of course, the entire scope of life." This is more or less the claim of all those who herald the new age now upon us—that our flow of data replaces nearly all that came before, including nature. Mark Fowler, the Reagan-era director of the Federal Communications Commission, appeared on C-SPAN and made this point explicitly. He mentioned the range of environmental problems we face, including global warming, the destruction of the rain forests, and the spread of acid rain. "Pretty dreary stuff," he said, "except that as the ecological system has deteriorated I think that the man-made communications ecology—the ebb and flow of words, video, voice, and data—has vastly improved, so that we live now in a world more tightly bound, more in touch one part with another, than any moment in its history." Fowler is not the only one to see this "communications" ecology as a sort of substitute for the other, older ecology. "Ours is an economy increasingly dependent not on our natural resources or geographic location but upon knowledge," President Bush told the Class of 1991 as they were about to leave the California Institute of Technology. "Ours is an age of microchips and MTV."

Against such a tide of opinion, it sounds a little romantic to say that maybe if you climbed a mountain and sat by a pond beside a hemlock tree for a day you might acquire some information that would serve you well. For instance, as the sun comes up I'm sitting by the edge of the pond on Crow, drinking tea and wondering idly if the weather will hold all day, so I can hike to the cliffs on nearby Blackberry Mountain. Ransacking my brain for weather lore, I recall that red skies at night are a sailor's delight, a ring around the moon heralds snow, and woolly caterpillars are woolliest before a hard winter, none of which are much help. I find myself wishing that I could gauge the wind direction and its speed, add the feel of the air and the type of clouds overhead, and make a reasonable guess, as most Americans once could, of what the day would bring. Of course, this is no longer an essential skill; on the Fairfax cable system alone you can watch not only the twenty-four-hour national Weather Channel but also a local radar weather channel that shows storms moving inexorably, pixel by pixel, in your direction. You'd be crazy to devote any time to learning to forecast from the clouds and the wind; they wouldn't be as accurate as the giggly guy in the loud sports coat, and who is there to teach you, anyhow? A skill like this, in itself, may not be so important. However, in the course of a lifetime spent performing it one could not help accumulating a large store of what you could call "fundamental" information. Even the dullest farmer quickly learns, for instance, a deep sense of limits. You can't harvest crops successfully until you understand how much can be grown without exhausting the soil, how much rest the land requires, which fields can be safely plowed and which are so erosion-prone that they're best left to some other purpose. This sense of the limits of one particular place grants you some sense that the world as a whole has limits, a piece of information we've largely forgotten, in part because being a successful businessperson involves constantly breaking through limits. Instead of learning about limits before they reach kindergarten, kids watch, say, "The Gobots," cartoon characters that transform themselves from robots into late-model automobiles and back. On this day, the show unveiled a new invention: a "proton cultivator that will solve the problems of feeding the people of the earth. It will make barren land fertile"; indeed, a single dose turned cartoon desert to cartoon corn.

It's a comfortable notion that as we progress we simply add to our store of understanding of the world—that we know more about the world by kindergarten than our grandparents knew when they died, and that our grandchildren will be infinitely wiser than we are. In truth, though, we usually learn a new way of doing things at the expense of the old way. In this case, we've traded away most of our physical sense of the world, and, with it, a whole category of information, of understanding; instead, we have a new understanding, reflected ubiquitously by television, which in many respects is sophisticated and powerful. But there's much that television leaves out, that it can't include, and even a short stay in the natural world—in a tent in the wilderness, or just sitting on a bench in a city park—can allow you to pull in this older, broader broadcast. The lessons of that natural world grow ever fainter—less natural, increasingly overwhelmed by the static of our civilization. Unless we hear and heed them, our idea that we live in a true "age of information" will be an empty boast.

11:30 A.M.: "I Dream of Jeannie" (the one where she gets tomorrow's newspapers, complete with racing results) has just come on. I'm watching 1965. According to CNN, a statue of Philo Farnsworth was unveiled yesterday in the Capitol Rotunda. As a sixteen-year-old high-school student in Provo, Utah, Philo described to his physics teacher the idea for what he called an "image dissector," or camera tube. Five years later, in 1927, he used the device to transmit a picture—appropriately, a picture of a dollar sign. That's the outside edge of the history of television; at most, it's sixty-five. In truth, though, television as we know it was postponed by the Second World War, and it wasn't until 1946 or 1947 that people started buying sets in any real numbers. That is to say, the television we would recognize stretches back about forty-five years. But because of TV's power, and, even more, its limits, those forty-five years make up most of our sense of the world—at least, if we were born in these years. We know the period stunningly well; it has a nuanced, subtle familiarity, unlike anything else in human experience.

This is a most curious distortion of our sense of time. We don't know the past forty-five years so well just because they're so recent; if that were the case, we'd have a gradual tailing off in our knowledge, with the sixties much less vivid than the seventies. We know those years because we watch them constantly, again and again. The history—social, cultural, musical, economic, political—of the last forty-five years appears every day a thousand times on our screens, and more and more frequently as the days go by. You could spend an entire day hopping from channel to channel and never leave sixties sitcoms. And they are not mere filler. Cable channels like Nickelodeon have discovered that large numbers of people will watch the past's network fare over and over; in a row the channels run "Dobie Gillis," "Bewitched," "Green Acres," "The Donna Reed Show," "Rowan and Martin's Laugh-In," "My Three Sons," "The Patty Duke Show," and "Make Room for Daddy," then go back to "Dobie Gillis" for the next installment. The networks understand this appeal, too: as the *Rolling Stone* critic Jay Martel noted, in 1990 they ran a movie called "Gunsmoke: The Last Apache," and also "Return to Green Acres"; updates of "Candid Camera," "Dark Shadows," "Lassie," and "To Tell the Truth"; and a program called "The Brady Brides." Lisa Kennedy pointed out in the *Village Voice* that on the new Fox network almost every show "refers knowingly to some other point in TV history: 'Totally Hidden Video' to 'Candid Camera,' '21 Jump Street' to 'The Mod Squad,' 'The Simpsons' to the Charlie Brown specials." Advertisers are hip as well: Coca-Cola resurrected its classic hilltop commercials, and Mr. Peanut shills once more for Planters. We are happily trapped in a familiar museum, condemned to know in unbelievable detail the attitudes and styles of this one period. What happened before will always seem strange and dreamlike.



A Self in Love

To understand the depth of that absorption, look at the old cartoons that still run. A whole series without main characters dates from the late thirties and early forties; the cartoons are small, exquisitely animated operas, and are shown regularly in the pre-school and home-from-school slots. They are among the only punctures in this closed system—when they were made, there wasn't TV, or just barely was, and so their content had to come from before television. There's one cartoon of a bookshelf, for instance, with Little Women coming to life on a book jacket and swooning over Frank Sinatra. Mother Goose appears, too, and Kim. The wolf from Little Red Riding Hood chases Daffy Duck until a cop steps off the cover of the *Police Gazette* to arrest him; the judge from the magazine *Judge*, which ceased publication during the Depression, delivers the verdict, and the wolf falls into Dante's "Inferno." In a Merrie Melodies short called "Goofy Groceries," the cow on a can of condensed milk croons to the bull on a tobacco tin. A stick of Wiggly Gum turns into Little Egypt, the stripper, while the navy beans rush to rescue the cancan (tomato) dancers from the Animal Crackers ape. I have no idea what kids make of this—I imagine that most of it goes over their heads, as when Porky Pig, in the French Foreign Legion, goes off to a Legion convention in Boston to hear an address by General Delivery, or when Popeye goes to the jungle in a faithful Stanley-and-Livingstone reënactment ("Dr. Bluto, I presume"). The crackle of reference after reference, all of which are from the world before television, and many of which go over my head, too, makes these shows hypnotically different from the fare of just a decade or two later. By then, Wilma is saying to Fred and Betty and Barney, "Let's have our kind of fun tonight. Let's just stay home, curl up in front of the TV, and make some popcorn." Stone Age life is utterly familiar—that's the joke.

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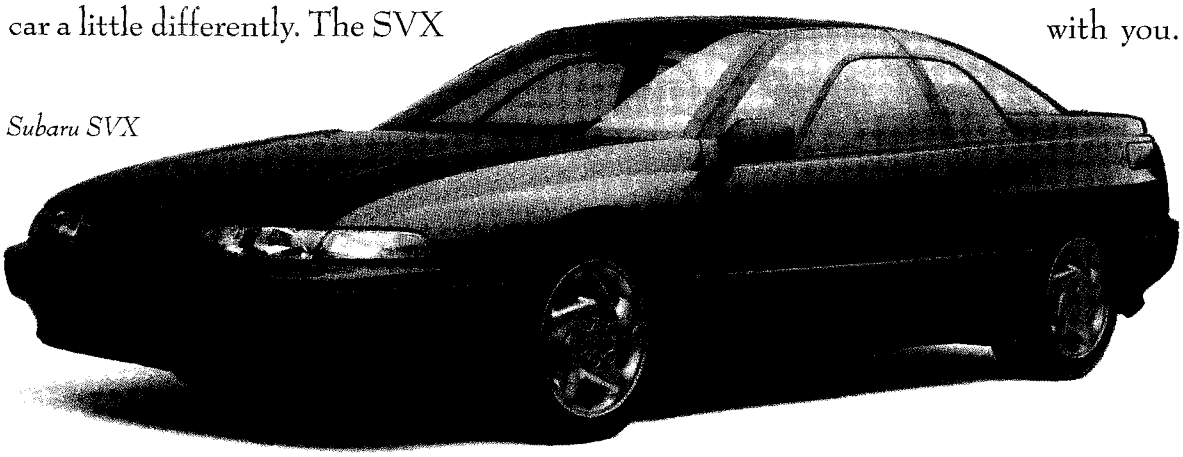

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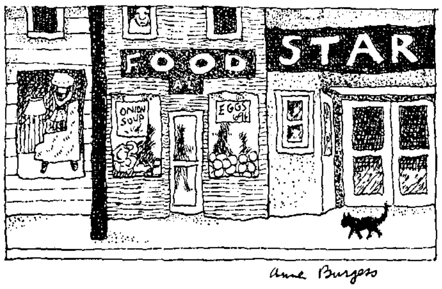
[1] *Road & Track's* Guide to the New SVX, May 1991. *Suggested retail price. Does not include dealer preparation, inland transportation, taxes, license and title fees. Dealer's actual price may vary. For additional information, 1-800-284-8584. See your participating dealer about the SVX Freedom Lease. © Subaru of America, 1991.

turn of the century, obviously. To TV, that is a black hole that can't be illuminated, because there is no film. It's all prehistory, cave paintings, to be explored only occasionally, in a costume drama. But because it is a costume drama it doesn't seem *real*, and we have a deep and intuitive sense of the "real": real is when you have a picture of it, even if it's a soap opera. But it needs to be a good, crisp picture. The newsreel images from the cusp of the TV age look a little distorted. In the nineteen-thirties and forties, did boxers really fall differently when they were punched? Because the early cameras filmed at slower speeds, the herky-jerkiness, the sudden, fast drop to the canvas make the fight films seem odd, dated, the way that crowds seem to move through the streets too fast in Chaplin films. We instantly recognize these images as outside television—as archival. Even after the camera was working smoothly, it took a while for non-actors to learn to look natural. One documentary on A&E showed newsreel footage of Eisenhower inaugurating the Echo 1 satellite: he spoke *at* the microphone, like someone ordering from a Burger King drive-through. "It gives me great personal satisfaction to participate in this communications experiment," he said, unconvincingly. In another documentary that day, J.F.K. appeared. He was, of course, a vastly different man, but that was only part of it; more important, appearing on TV was no longer a historic event. Speaking to a banquet audience, he said, "I am the man who accompanied Jacqueline Kennedy to Paris," and then he grinned his broad grin. The distance between that moment and the present is as nothing.

And after that time nothing looks "old." Not Fred MacMurray lecturing his boys, not the Dick Van Dyke living room with the famous ottoman. The Mary who lived in that house was an emblem of a very different time from that of the Mary who worked with Ted and Murray and Lou, but both are utterly and equally accessible to us—neither looks "off." They don't clash. Time within the TV period is fluid, usable—we can all deconstruct and reassemble it as if we were a nation of Ph.D. candidates. Consider the strange case of Martha Quinn, who was one of the original v.j.s a decade ago on MTV. Then she was hip, up-to-the-minute. All the other original v.j.s have long since been replaced by much younger kids, but Martha is still there, and she has swung back through time. Here she is in a crushed-velvet gown, like something from a chic Haight-Ashbury thrift store. "The other day, I heard on the radio—the radio station played the entire album of 'Sergeant Pepper's,' " she's saying, in her appealingly goofy, straight-haired way. "And I was completely blown away. I was thinking, What if it was back in 1967, and this is when, like, 'The Letter' by the Box Tops was out, or Lulu's 'To Sir with Love'? These were the albums that were on the charts. And all of a sudden Paul McCartney's whole concept of 'Sergeant Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band'! . . . Absolutely incredibly mind-blowing. And the man who came up with the *concept* of the *idea* of it being a band, Sergeant Pepper, is Paul McCartney. We have Paul McCartney coming up." And, sure enough, after some commercials here came Paul McCartney, equal parts cute Beatle and "serious musician" and venerated star, singing his new single.

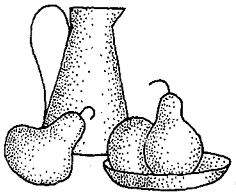
You don't have to have been there physically to achieve this kind of fluency. The next song, "Put the Message in the Box," was by a group called World Party, whose members looked as if they might have been in fourth grade when Jefferson Airplane sang "White Rabbit." And yet they'd painstakingly made their video appear as if it had emerged in, say, May of 1969. There's a guy in an old hat with the brim pinned back looking as if he'd stepped off the cover of a Paul Revere and the Raiders album. A Hindu deity flashes up on the screen. The lead singer has those big, pillowlike headphones around his neck. Wait—the picture is revolving! "See the world in just one grain of sand, / You better take a closer look / Don't let it slip right through your hand." Every detail is right, down to the wide, colorfully embroidered guitar strap. Other hot groups on MTV that day included Wilson Phillips, kiddos of Mamas, Papas, and Beach Boys; and Nelson, the sons of the rock-and-roll-but-especially-TV star Ricky Nelson. The *grandsons* of Ozzie and Harriet.



Our sense of time within these television years is so acute that we can make all sorts of jokes from it. One ad features a man from a marketing concept called the '70s Preservation Society, offering an album called "Those Fabulous '70s," with songs like the Partridge Family's "I Think I Love You," and the Bay City Rollers' "Saturday Night," and "The Night Chicago Died," and "Billy, Don't Be a Hero." Time-Life, a kind of cataloguing service for the images of this era, sells a sounds-of-the-seventies set, one volume per year. Or you can buy uncut versions of the great "Beverly Hillbillies" episodes, or expand your "Looney Tunes Library." This is our cultural patrimony. Ira Gallen, the host of a public-access cable program that takes "an affectionate glance at the television programs and commercials of the fifties and sixties," told the *Times* recently, "I'll be turning forty next month, and those of us on the brink belong to the first generation able to look back to a blatantly documented childhood. Everything we ate, drank, wore, touched, was seen on television and is there for all time." There, every day, at every turn, TV life is being lived in exhaustive detail by people who weren't alive when it happened the first time.

TV endlessly refers to itself, thereby adding to the strange sense that you are pickling in its juices. The most fanatic environmentalist doesn't recycle with half the relish of television producers. Even the mistakes made on TV are lovingly collected. Turn on HA!, the "humor" network (it later merged with the Comedy Channel to become a new channel, Comedy Central), and you see a rerun of "TV's Bloopers and Practical Jokes"—that is, a rerun of a collection of old, old clips introduced by Dick Clark and Ed McMahon, who themselves have been here forever. What funny film they've got! Look—Willard Scott has lost his hairpiece! Then they show some "sexy foreign commercials," made under "regulations a lot more relaxed," Dick explains as he introduces a reel of salacious Italian ads. Advertisements stay as monuments in our minds. On the "Today" show, three jingle writers have appeared to sing their hits, like

"Good time, great taste of McDonald's," or "Can't beat the real thing," or "All aboard Amtrak," or "Listen to the heartbeat of America." On "Top Card," on the Nashville Network, contestants need to know if Carly Simon's "Anticipation" was the song for Hunt's or Heinz ketchup, and to recognize the Marlboro theme song, which hasn't been played for two decades—not since Congress outlawed televised cigarette commercials. Even when the question's not about TV, we assume that it must be. On a forgettable program called "Win, Lose or Draw," a celebrity is trying to illustrate the phrase "Father, Son, and Holy Ghost," but all that the contestant can think of is the name of the clergyman on the old sitcom "Happy Days."



The talk shows, of course, are mostly about TV, and the news has the same internal preoccupations. All day, it reported that Kelsey Grammer (Dr. Crane on "Cheers") had missed a court-ordered drug-rehabilitation date. But there he was on "Cheers," drinking beer! Nearly every newscast also reported in great detail on the suicide the previous day of a dwarf actor named David Rappaport, who had appeared often on "L.A. Law." On "L.A. Law" itself, ruthless Ros resigned from the firm. The show ended, the news came on, and there was Diana Muldaur, the actress who played Ros, giving a long interview about her role: "She horrifies me, to be honest with you. Every time I would read a script, I would just say, 'Oh, she's not going to do that. It's just too horrible.' " It was like watching a post-game interview with an athlete.

There are all sorts of comedy on television—whole networks are devoted to standup routines—and an awful lot of jokes refer to TV, the great common reference. Here's a brilliant impression of the Six Million Dollar Man. Then there's the theme from "Hawaii Five-0" on a kazoo. There's even one comic on "An Evening at the Improv" whose shtick consists of impersonating a TV, switching constantly from one channel to the next. Layers of reference pile up on each other like the ruins of successive cities: to promote its reruns of "Dobie Gillis," Nickelodeon uses the slogan "Man, it's, like, Gilligan in a goatee."

But this staggering absorption in TV culture comes at a price. History is weirdly foreshortened; for instance, all anniversaries from the TV period are marked with great care and attention—at least, if whatever happened was captured on film. This was the day before the twentieth anniversary of Kent State, so every station was gearing up its coverage—digging out the shaky film clips of the Guardsmen and the students facing each other across the practice field, and the footage of Walter Cronkite delivering the news, and expert after expert agreeing that this incident, seen immediately all across America, "brought the war home." However, nothing that happened *before* television is covered in any detail. The brightness surrounding the last forty-five years blinds us to everything that preceded it—and forty-five years is a very short time, even to an individual. Bob Hope, for instance, came on the J. C. Penney shopping channel to hawk his new book. We know Bob Hope from years of specials, from footage of him entertaining the troops. But he is an old man. He's talking about the Second World War, and tells a joke about how F.D.R. trained his dog Fala on the Chicago *Tribune*. The interviewer brays—convulses—but, until Bob explains, it's hard to believe he knows anything about Colonel McCormack's feud with Roosevelt; Bob might as well be telling Thomas Aquinas jokes.

There are shows that become part of the oversoul. Take "The Brady Bunch," whose theme song is as widely known as the national anthem, and whose example is invoked over and over. A Showtime program on divorce, for instance, presents a bewildered kid saying, "We were like a very hip 'Brady Bunch.' " In Chicago, and then in Manhattan, crowds jam a theatre each week to see a different "Brady Bunch" episode performed live. The Lifetime network, on one of its talk shows, convened a summit of sitcom moms. All kinds of women were there—the mom from "One Day at a Time," and the woman Fred MacMurray finally married during the 1969-70 season of "My Three Sons," and Mrs. Jefferson, and Molly Dodd's mother, and even the actress who played Lily Munster. But they all deferred to Florence Henderson, Mrs. Brady, who talked about how every parent strives

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for a union like that between the Bradys, and said that psychiatrists used tapes of the show in counselling couples—a job that may have grown more interesting after the revelation (on "Geraldo") that the actor playing the eldest son, Greg, had dated Florence Henderson during the filming of the show. A recent survey of twenty-one-to-twenty-five-year-olds, commissioned by MTV, revealed that their favorite program was "The Brady Bunch," which ended its original run when they were three-to-seven-year-olds. "I think it gave people hope that there was a family like that," Florence Henderson said. An utterly *normal* family—their "gimmick" was *not* being a rock band or interracial or robots. Ostensibly, they were two separate families—three guys and three gals ("with hair of gold like their mother's")—that had come together. But this never caused any tension in the show. Almost nothing ever caused tension; it was just kids being kids and parents being parents. A professor from the State University of New York said, "My students know 'The Brady Bunch' better than their own parents' birthdates."

That is, they know a life where no work is done—usually not even by the maid—because there are appliances in every corner. They know a life where everything happens in a big and isolated suburban home. Where parents are mostly pals, where money flows in, where food just appears. We can make fun of it, laugh at it, deconstruct it, but all of us who grew up with it, which is to say nearly everyone born since it went on the air, are affected by it. Very few of us can afford to live like the Bradys; even the *hope* of such a life style, which once seemed an obvious promise of the future, is fading as the middle class shrinks, and as having just one or two children requires both parents to work. And, even if individuals can afford that life style, it's also become clear that the planet probably can't—that the world, were it composed of a billion Brady Bunches, would buckle under the environmental strain. We may recognize, almost instinctively, those problems. The absurd excess of the eighties, the painful slowdown of the nineties—many of us are left wondering if there isn't some other path. But "The Brady Bunch" and all its imitators are what we know in our hearts. And so the search for something different—something more sustainable and maybe less sterile—never gets under way, because we *know* what normal is.

NOON: Unable though I was to forecast the weather, I retained sufficient mother wit to recognize that it had turned into a beautiful day, and so I set out to climb Blackberry Mountain, Crow's smaller neighbor.

From the pond I followed a brook down to the valley between the two peaks. It is a mossy cool trickle in the summer, and instead of clambering over deadfall along the banks you can hop easily from rock to rock down the creek. I stopped occasionally at the small clear pools to admire the water striders, their legs making slight dimples on the tense surface, their bodies casting impressive shadows on the creek bottom as they went about their inscrutable business.

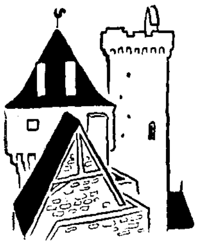
When I reached the valley, I could look up at the open cliffs at the top of Blackberry. Since there is no trail to the summit, I just hit out along a compass bearing through the woods. The bottom slopes have been logged in the last couple of decades, and the sun pours into the clearings, which are luxuriant with thorny berry cane. I fought my way through, and after twenty minutes or so, as the slope steepened, rock patches began to appear, and the trees were fewer and bigger. In the shade of one hemlock, I lay down to rest. After about ten minutes, at least a dozen small birds began to resume the activity I had interrupted with my noisy arrival. They were mostly thrushes, and they flew in and out of the branches in what looked like a high-speed game of tag, over and over, alighting now on a swaying bough, then launching themselves off into the air once more.

After my rest, I climbed the remaining distance to Blackberry's long summit ridge, and walked out along the top of the steep cliffs that face back to Crow. The wind was blowing below—I could hear it rush like white water, and see where it was riffling the maple tops in the mountain valley—but up on top it was still, and the sun baked the fragrant pine needles. While I was sitting, drinking from my canteen, I saw a vulture appear way below in the draw between the mountains. He circled slowly and methodically up, holding his wings in a stiff, lacquered bow, never flapping, always soaring. Eventually, after a half hour, he was directly above me on the cliffs, perhaps a hundred feet above me, still circling. He was joined there by four, then five, finally six others, circling so close to me I could count feathers. At moments, I felt small and vulnerable, like prey: if they disappeared from view for a minute, I wanted to know where they were. But by the time I rose to go back to my tent on Crow, I felt almost protected, watched over. It had been thrilling; my heart was beating hard.

a. ehrenberg

Still, by the standards of television nature documentaries, the water striders and the thrushes, and even the vultures, were hardly worth mentioning. I had not been gored, chased, or even roared at. I had failed to tranquillize anything with a dart; no creature had inflated stupendous air sacs in a curious and ancient mating ritual, or eaten its young, or done any of the other marvellous tricks that are performed around the clock on nature television. You could spend nearly the whole day watching nothing but nature documentaries, and if you did you would emerge exhausted.

Nature on TV is the job of a man named Graham or Ian or Nigel who makes every announcement ("Using his incisors like a comb, the marmot attends to his thick underfleece") sound like Churchill in wartime. The point of the show can be, say, that elephants are all but exterminated in a certain African refuge, but you can be sure that our host will find one. Not one—dozens. "I think there's a jolly good chance of sketching this lot," the host is saying as he gets out of his Land Rover. "There's the matriarch—she's the one to watch. I'd be crazy to get too close to her. If I can reach that anthill, I can get some good sketches. She's accompanied by uncles and aunties of all ages—the young males get kicked out because they get stroppy." On the voice-over, the narrator may be confessing the boring truth: "Lions are lazy—the males are the worst. They'll sleep twenty hours a day if they get the chance." But on the screen the lions are training their young by chasing jackals and other exotic game. Oooh, so much for that zebra! The man in the Land Rover, obligatory spare tire on the bonnet, tracks the pride toward a watering hole, never losing sight of them. He spies some ostriches: "Ostriches mean water, and water means life—and the lion feels an ancient urge. Perhaps she's come upon a place to start a pride." Oooh—lion sex! Cubs come tumbling out after a two- or three-minute gestation, full of play, and the timeless cycle repeats. Oooh, poor wildebeest! Switch the channel, and someone is releasing a seal from a California aquarium. The seal starts to travel north, but suddenly a killer whale is on his tail. A brief respite in a kelp bed ("It's the life of Riley, lying on your back and eating crab so fresh it tries to walk away"), and then our seal resumes his trip up the coast to the Pribilofs, where the breeding beach is a great, heaving mass of flippers. At the precise moment our hero washes ashore, men appear with baseball bats for the annual fur harvest; fortunately, he retreats to the safety of the ocean before they can get him, and stays alive for the documentaries that will surely follow.



It would be churlish to complain about these gorgeous films, because TV nature shows have, without any question, done immense good. Species exist today that would be fossil records if television had never been invented. Your can of tuna has a little "dolphin safe" symbol on it because in 1963 Chuck Connors starred in a film called "Flipper," which gave birth to a TV show of the same name. The movie version was shown on May 3rd, and in the month of May alone it was on the Disney Channel five times and Cinemax twice, so presumably each new generation sees the boy battle his stern, old-fashioned father, who actually believes that dolphins are a threat to his fishery. "If they come, we'll kill them. We have no choice," the father says. The rise of environmental consciousness over the intervening three decades can be gauged by just how shocking this attitude now seems. Some fishermen still kill dolphins, but they try to hide their work, because nearly everyone agrees that it is a sickening waste; in 1963, obviously, *not* killing dolphins was regarded as revolutionary, and "Flipper" is a key reason for the change.

Still, virtually everyone in the industrialized world has a television and has presumably, if only by accident, seen many hours of nature films—seen a more diverse and wondrous natural world than man could ever have seen before. Yet, measured in the largest terms, such appeals to preserve the environment aren't really working. We're still not willing to dramatically change our habits. Species continue to disappear, and at an accelerating rate; Presidents continue to propose, say, drilling for oil in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, square in the middle of an enormous caribou herd. Why can't Graham and Ian and Nigel stop this?

Possibly because, for all their dart guns and millions of feet of film, they actually get across remarkably little information—much less than you'd acquire almost unconsciously from a good long hike. Half the time, they specialize in misinformation, undercutting their message with their pictures. The Englishman is telling you that this great flightless bird is on the edge of extinction, but for half an hour he is showing you endless pictures of the great flightless bird, so how bad can the threat be? The actual numbers of surviving big mammals are astoundingly small. Grizzly bears in the lower forty-eight states can be counted in the hundreds. In fact, you've probably seen a large fraction of them at one time or another, wandering slowly through the telephoto field of a Yellowstone camera. But they appear so often they seem numerous.

Something even more insidious happens when you get most of your nature through television, though: the "real" nature around you, even when it's intact, begins to seem dull. Nature films are like highlight clips shown on the evening sportscast, all rim-bending slam dunks and bleachers-clearing home runs and knee-crumpling knockout punches. If you had been raised on a steady diet of such footage and then went to a game, you'd feel cheated. What is all this business with singles and pop flies? Why do the hockey players skate around for so long be-

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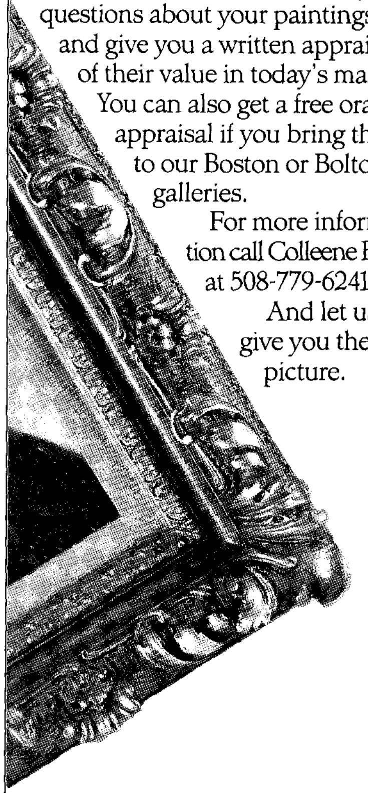


tween fights? In the natural world, where the ratio of observable high drama is much lower, the problem is even more severe.

In many years of hiking in the East, I've happened across bears twice. Once, in Maine, I rounded a corner on a trail, and there, three feet away, as lost in thought as I had been, sat a black bear. One look at me and she dived for the bushes—total contact time, perhaps four seconds. A few years later, walking near my house with my wife, I heard a noise in a treetop, and suddenly another black bear, roughly the size and shape of a large sofa, dropped to the ground a few yards away. She glowered in our direction and then lit out the opposite way. Time of engagement: maybe seven seconds. Those were grand encounters, and they've spiced every other day I've spent in the woods—on the way up Blackberry, for instance, I sang as I waded through the berry bushes, aware that this was where any bear with an appetite would be, especially after I found fresh berry-filled scat. But if I counted as dramatic only those days when I actually saw a big fierce mammal I would think the forest a boring place indeed.

Even if you did go to the woods and see a rare animal, and somehow managed to creep up real close, chances are it wouldn't be doing anything all that amazing. Chances are it would be lying in the sun, or perhaps grooming itself, or maybe, like the duck on the pond, swimming back and forth. A lot of animals are remarkably good at sitting still (especially when they suspect they're under surveillance), and this is something TV never captures. The nature documentaries are as absurdly action-packed as the soap operas, where a life's worth of divorce, adultery, and sudden death is crammed into a week's worth of watching. Trying to understand "nature" from watching "Wild Kingdom" is as tough as trying to understand "life" from watching "Dynasty."

4:13 P.M.: Doug, the weatherman, is standing on the roof of a building against a gray sky, holding a folding chair in front of the camera. "You're not going to like this forecast," he says. "As a matter of fact, listen, I brought a chair out here, because it's going to rain tomorrow and Saturday and Sunday."

"So you don't want us to knock you off the roof, is that what you're doing?" the anchorwoman says.

"That's right," says Doug, who then details the weekend outlook—"no major improvements . . . not at all encouraging"—as if he were a doctor and the climate were in a coma. "Now, to add insult to injury, on top of the chances of rain showers, we're looking at the very real possibility of much cooler weather developing. . . . In one of the discussions on the computer this afternoon, there was a very nasty four-letter meteorological word that was used to describe possible weather by the first part of next week in West Virginia."

The anchorwoman asks, "If we use our imagination about West Virginia, if we come up with a four-letter word that has an 's' at the beginning and a 'w' at the end, would we be far from wrong?"

"And 'no' in between?" the anchorman asks.

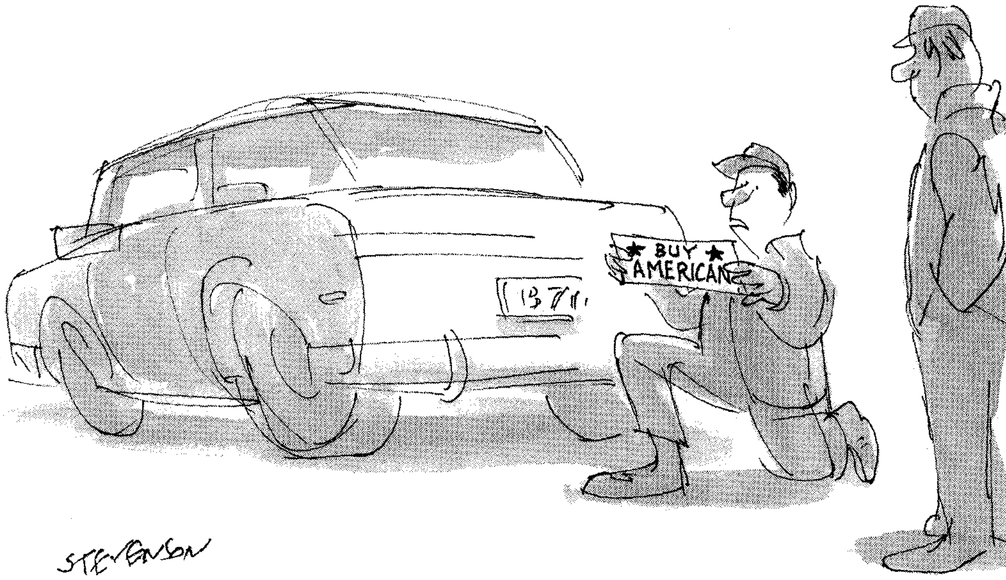
"Mmm," Doug says coyly.

Wrapping up his forecast, Doug says, "That's it, I've got my chair. Don't come up here and get me now—I've got my chair."

Everyone knows, at some level, that the sharp line between "good weather" and "bad weather" is a fiction—that we need rain as surely as we need sun. Weathermen, despite their often aberrant personalities, usually have a sound meteorological education and know this better than most of us. And yet, almost without exception, they obey the convention that clear blue skies are good and precipitation is not. Obey it? They embrace it. Topper Shott, the morning meteorologist on the local CBS station, rated each day as if he were a figure-skating judge. Friday, he said, would score a 5.5 on a scale of ten, up from a flat five the day before.

This convention interests me mainly because it is so similar to another commonplace of the news. "There's good news on the economic scene," an announcer said in the local newsbreak during "CBS This Morning." "A report by the Greater Washington Research Center says the Washington area will soon resume the rapid economic and population growth it has experienced in recent years." On "Nation's Business Today," which occupies ESPN until it's time for Monster Trucks, the announcer is just as cheerful: "Yesterday's leading economic indicators and factory orders further confirm a strengthening economy," and the news helped send the Dow up. Also, the Fed has issued its "Beige Book," which "seemed to reinforce the views of many economists that recent inflation numbers have been exaggerated." All was not sunny, however; though these reports predated the current recession by about three months, storm clouds were on the horizon. "The International Monetary Fund is meeting this week," an ABC newswoman said. "It's worried about the world economy, estimating it will grow only two point five per cent this year, the worst since 1982." From South Korea came news of angry investors kicking down brokerage doors and beating up securities traders: accustomed to double-digit growth, the country experienced "a major comedown" the previous year, when its gross national product grew only 6.7 per cent. An expanding economy, in other words, draws exactly the same smiles as a blue-sky forecast; a slowdown in global economic growth, to the point where it expands just 2.5 per cent annually (doubling in size, that is, in about twenty-eight years), is as ominous as the chance of a West Virginia snowstorm. And in this case it isn't even partly tongue in cheek. No one says, "Well, we do need the rain." If there is any one subject on which everybody on TV seems to agree, any one point of doctrine to which every political sect subscribes, it's that "economic growth" is the highest goal, our ultimate goal as a nation.

This is certainly understandable. We can observe all around us the misery caused by a cessation of growth—the fact that our unprecedentedly large and prosperous economy has stayed the same size for eighteen months has us in a panic. But the virtues of endless growth are not beyond debate. The greatest danger is that the human pursuit of growth will go so well that its by-products will destroy us. Every time you burn coal, oil, or gas, you release carbon dioxide into the atmosphere—five and a half pounds of carbon for every gallon of gas you use. There is no filter you can put on your car engine or your smokestack to reduce this flow of carbon dioxide, which acts as an insulating blanket around the planet; as it starts to heat the atmosphere, we can expect disruptions of every physical system, from ice caps to ocean marshes to cornfields. That is to say, a failure to change, in the very near future, from economies dependent on economic growth to sustainable economies may turn the world we know into a strained, forbidding place. And it's not simply the greenhouse effect. A growing human population, using ever more resources and taking up ever more space, would, if it did nothing else, inevitably crowd out much of the other life on earth. We could conceivably escape disaster, but, in the absence of real change, we seem destined for ecological impoverishment.



"Hey, this says 'Made in Japan.'"

Another challenge to the idea of material progress, of endless economic growth, occurred to me as I reclined in front of the TV watching the history of the last forty-five years. And that challenge is a simple one: things *aren't* progressing. I don't mean that we're not getting richer (though we're not: between 1969 and 1989, median family income in constant dollars rose only five hundred and sixty-two dollars, from $28,344 to $28,906). I mean that if, as the society urges, we all made twice as much money our cash could buy us very little additional luxury, or even ease. Daily material life as it is presented on TV has scarcely changed between 1960, when I was born, and the present.

This is not to say that progress has never brought change. In a report about the city of Vancouver turning a hundred, there was an interview with a woman, now in a nursing home, who was born there shortly before the city was founded, when it was a circle of shacks. In her lifetime, *everything* changed. People learned to talk across long distances on telephones, to travel easily and routinely in automobiles. School became standard, even in remote areas. Occupations divided and specialized, replacing self-sufficient ways of life. Appliances transformed the home. Birth control allowed limits on reproduction. Easy refrigeration changed the way we thought about food. Most people's bathrooms moved indoors. People washed their bodies daily, not weekly. Medicine eliminated most childhood deaths, and made all lives healthier and more secure. Radio and then television spread a universal culture. Farming became mechanized to the point where most people were freed from the soil. All these revolutions changed the world—and all of them took place before 1960.

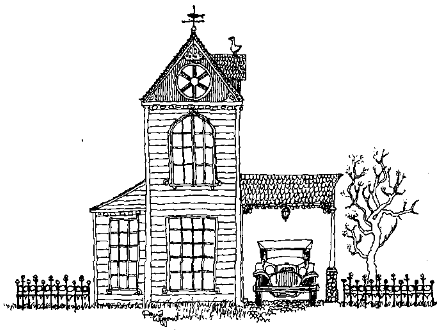
When I was born, we had telephones. We had airplanes—we even had jets. We had vitamin tablets—we even had doctors telling us that eating a healthy diet made more sense than gulping pills. We had computers, though they were huge and not so powerful. They have improved and shrunk astonishingly in the decades since, and yet they have made very little difference in daily life outside the office. Most computers that are used at home are either toys or efficient typewriters; on the job, they have replaced a lot of tedious tasks (and the people who did them), but most of the major features of corporate life were firmly in place by 1960. A number of people may be able to do their jobs at home, but they are much the same jobs. Certainly every study shows that the amount of leisure time has decreased drastically in the last thirty years, so computers aren't freeing us from labor. (Or from paper and ink: pen sales grew twelve per cent in 1990, to a record three and a quarter billion dollars.)

The proof of our stasis is available twenty-four hours a day. Without suffering any real culture shock, you can watch TV shows that are thirty years old. Big changes have taken place—the semi-emancipation of minorities and women, the fall of the Communist empire, and so forth—but in material terms life on a nineteen-sixties sitcom closely mirrors life on a nineteen-nineties sitcom. If you walked into Samantha's kitchen on "Bewitched," you would know how to make breakfast; in fact, you'd use many of the same products. It's almost eerie, for instance, that the same sugary breakfast cereals that rotted my teeth still rot the teeth of American youth. The bird is still cuckoo for Cocoa Puffs, the rabbit still finds to his immense sadness that Trix are for kids. (The one new breakfast development of my lifetime—Tang, the slurry orange juice of astronauts—seems to have all but disappeared from the airwaves.) If you walked into Tabitha's playroom, you'd recognize most of the toys—Barbie, for sure. (The ideal of feminine beauty has not appreciably shifted—Barbie's measurements remain standard.) Tabitha would probably have a Nintendo, which is new. But a modern kid who turned on Tabitha's TV (after searching fruitlessly for the remote control) would recognize the Mickey Mouse Club from its new incarnation, although the Mouseketeers now have good nineties names: Chase, Deedee, Lindsey, Marc, Jennifer, Joshua, Brandy, Ilana, Jason, Tiffani, Damon. Even the clothes in the closet would be more or less familiar—a nineteen-nineties Samantha might not dress quite so much like a coffee-tea-or-me stewardess, and she might have tossed out the various miracle synthetics in favor of cotton, but that's it. Her social life might well have changed, too; she'd probably have a career, and on her way to work she might have to step over homeless people. But the world of artifacts would be remarkably static.

If you performed a similar experiment in, say, 1946, returning to the average American home of 1910, the changes would be staggering. It's that time of rapid progress we're really thinking about when we tell ourselves stories about the dynamic twentieth century. By contrast, the memories of people my age are strangely familiar. A hostess on one of the shopping channels was urging viewers to buy TV trays. "I have very vivid memories of when my grandmother got her first TV trays," she said, her eyes misting. Or as the country-music crooner Mac McAnally sang in a deeply nostalgic song about his Mississippi home town, "TVs, they were black-and-white, back where I come from."

To go on believing that all this is shiny and exciting, we have to pretend that we're people we're not. Kentucky Fried Chicken was running an ad in the spring of 1990 that showed a babushka-clad Russian woman arriving in the United States for a visit. Her hosts immediately took her to a shoe store, where she marvelled at the selection, and to a highway overpass, where she gawked at the stream of traffic, and to an appliance store, where she reverently opened and closed the door of a refrigerator. For dinner, they all went to K.F.C., where she was predictably rapturous at her "first taste of America." Now, I've been to Russia, and this is *precisely* how a Russian would see our country—as a wonderland of well-made shoes and refrigerators you don't have to know a Party hack to buy. A working consumer society is a joy (though fresh fruit would be more of a miracle to a Russian than fried meat would be). But this ad is not aimed at babushkas; it's aimed at Americans, trying to make us feel as if it were somehow novel that we can buy refrigerators and fried chicken—feel that America is a new world of technical possibility. For us, this ad is emotional sleight of hand, not proof of progress.

Perhaps, though, we've been living on a plateau—perhaps we're about to take an escalator up some steep grade to some new nirvana, our lives as far superior to the lives of the Partridge family as theirs were to the Neanderthals'. "Great Scott!" Commissioner Gordon is shouting in a rerun of "Batman" which finds him in his first visit to the Batcave. "I feel as if I've awakened in some future age! Such equipment! What fantastic ingenuity you and the Boy Wonder have employed in hooking it together!" Or, as Governor Ann Richards, of Texas, told a commencement crowd recently, "we are going to be creating a world that will make 'Star Trek' look primitive." Perhaps. But probably not. The trouble is that there's almost nothing left in daily life to streamline. The evening newscast on the CBS affiliate featured a new Mitsubishi picture-phone, but this is a futuristic gadget we've been anticipating so long that it already feels out-of-date, and now that it's here it's hard to see how it's really going to change your life. (It's even harder to see how it's going to improve it.) On "The Jetsons," Elroy got his meals by pushing a button in the wall; a microwave, heating prepared entrées, is a reasonable facsimile. An ad, endlessly repeated, touts Glassmates, a product that makes it easier to remove fingerprints on glass and spots on mirrors. "Every day, I clean them. *Spray* on the cleaner, *scrub* with one paper towel, *dry* with another. *Three messy steps*," overcome at a single blow: these are the kinds of dragons we have left to slay. CNN interviewed a scientist who once worked to split the atom. He went on to develop the pat of butter, and now he's perfected a one-handed squeeze tube to replace the little ketchup packets you get at Burger King. The tube offers "exquisite control"—he's writing "Hi CNN" on cream cheese. One of the shopping channels is selling lights that flick on and off when you clap—"This little idea is going to revolutionize everything we do." But this isn't even new! When I was kid, we had a device called the Whistle Switch, which turned the TV on and off when you whistled. Or when you screamed. One night, a friend of my father's got very drunk and stood in front of the set howling like a coyote. We finally disconnected the switch when it shut off the Rose Bowl during a thrilling touchdown run that had all of us on our feet screaming.



LATE afternoon: After climbing down from Blackberry, I started back up the stream that led to the pond on Crow and to my camp. I was clambering contentedly along when I suddenly found myself out of strength—looking for easy routes through the woods to avoid hauling myself up the rocks in the stream. I had eaten very little lunch, and I had hiked hard much of the day, and I was getting a headache—I seemed to be running out of fuel. A few handfuls of chocolate and nuts, and a few minutes' rest, revived my muscles and scared off the headache.

The mountain offers certain lessons in human needs. It offers certain information crucial to answering the most important question of the late twentieth century, which is "How much is enough?" All day long on any American television, toothbrushes taunt each other, plumbers morosely take calls for Liquid Drāno, hamburgers urge that you cover them with two kinds of cheese, a boy's electroencephalogram reveals that he is thinking "Wrigley's is pure chewing satisfaction," a man in the rear of a Rolls borrows Grey Poupon, Godzilla chows down on Honey Nut Cheerios, Ed Koch reduces, the disembodied hand of Hamburger Helper poles a gondola through the canals of Venice. We take it for granted that companies will tell us that our emotional needs can be eased through purchases. ("Love you have to wait for. But Pantene you can just go get.") We'd be astounded if, as happened recently in Finland, a court ordered McDonald's to take an ad off the air. The commercial showed a boy who was sad about moving to a new home until he saw a Golden Arches

THE NEW GERMANY

A SPECIAL ADVERTISING SECTION

The Federal Republic of Germany
The Federal Chancellor

Bonn, January 1992

The past three years have seen great changes in our world. The courageous uprising of the people in Central, Eastern, and Southeastern Europe against communism and dictatorship and their peaceful revolution for democracy, human rights, and self-determination have initiated a reform process in which Germany, too, was able to regain its unity in freedom.

We Germans owe these radical changes not least to the efforts of the American nation. For decades, your country has defended freedom in Europe, and we will not forget the solidarity thus shown by our American friends. I should also like to thank President Bush for the outstanding help and support he gave us in the process of restoring our national unity through free self-determination after the fall of the Berlin Wall.

For over four decades, Germany was the focus of the East-West conflict. Today, we jointly face new challenges: we are called upon to safeguard political, economic, social, and ecological stability in those countries in Europe which freed themselves from the decades-old yoke of communist tyranny decades ago and are seeking to establish an economic and social order based on freedom.

In the eastern part of Germany (the former GDR), major restructuring work is needed. We have already laid important foundations for this by providing considerable resources. The speedy development of competitive private companies and a new, modern infrastructure is fully underway. It is worth investing there, and I am sure that in a few years' time, the eastern part of Germany will be one of the foremost industrial locations in Europe.

We have achieved our goal of German unification. But we cannot simultaneously rejoice at the freedom in countries such as Poland, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, and the Baltic states and yet leave the people on their own. We must help them, and the people in the republics of the former Soviet Union, to help themselves. We Germans have provided more than US $50 billion for this purpose — more than any other country in the world. But we cannot shoulder this burden alone. It is also in the interests of all our partners on both sides of the Atlantic that democracy, freedom, and human rights prevail throughout Europe. We must all play an appropriate part in this process.

The Cold War has been overcome, but new risks and imponderables have arisen. The presence of the United States in Europe will remain of vital importance for peace and security on our continent and, in particular, for the united Germany in its midst. In the last analysis, the Alliance alone can effectively counter risks to our security and maintain this vital strategic balance in Europe. But the Europeans, too, must contribute to this process, by strengthening the Alliance's European pillar. This calls for a common external and security policy and, in the long run, a common defence policy on the part of the EC countries. Fundamental decisions were taken on this at the EC summit in December last year, and I am firmly convinced that there can now be no turning back from the goal of political union in Europe.

The united Germany will also play an active part in mastering the global tasks of the future. Today, economic and social distress in the countries of the Third World, hunger and poverty, the plight of those fleeing starvation and environmental destruction, urgently call for solutions. A central concern of my policy remains the development of a global environmental partnership, which will enable us to preserve and protect our shared natural resources for the benefit of future generations.

I am pleased *The New Yorker* has brought out this special supplement to inform you about "The New Germany," and I warmly invite you to pay us a visit.

Sincerely, Mit freundlichen Grüßen

Helmut Kohl

Some people think they've been to Germany if they've sailed along the Rhine, seen a Bavarian castle, or toured the medieval towns of the Romantic Road or the modern metropolises of Frankfurt or Munich. But there's also the homeland of Martin Luther, J. S. Bach, and Goethe, the land of Prussian palaces and the treasures of Dresden. It's a Germany few Americans have seen.

Now that these two countries are one, motorists can drive on twentieth-century autobahns or on sixteenth-century cobblestone streets, and a traveller can ride the rails at record speed or chug along in a century-old steam train in the Harz Mountains. Here one can take in some of the best-known sights in Europe or discover unexpected pleasures.

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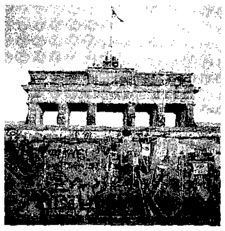
BERLIN AND ENVIRONS

Berlin without the Wall was, until recently, as hard to imagine as Paris without the Eiffel Tower. Now pieces of the Wall are on sale in souvenir packets hawked by eager entrepreneurs. A graffiti-covered section of the concrete barrier was left standing, preserved as a reminder for those who never saw Berlin when it was a divided city.

The neoclassical Brandenburg Gate has undergone its own transformation. The two-hundred-year-old landmark at the heart of Berlin was enclosed by a grim no man's land when the Wall went up. Now one can saunter through the gate, making in minutes a trip that once could take hours at border controls. But the contrasts are still stark. Berlin in many ways is Germany in microcosm: up-to-date shops and hotels are in the west, while the eastern sector has many historic buildings, some still in ruins.



The Wall and the Brandenburg Gate

The capital's cultural attractions are evident throughout. Among the most renowned is the Gemäldegalerie art museum in the Dahlem district, whose masterpieces span the centuries. In the River Spree is museum island, famed for the Pergamon Museum of antiquities and the immense ancient Greek altar that gave the institution its name. The Ishtar Gate of Babylon is among its many treasures. Next door is the Bodemuseum of ancient Egyptian art and the Altes Museum, which has a sizable collection of modern drawings and paintings.

Along Unter den Linden in the eastern sector are the grand opera house and other architectural reminders of old Berlin. Also of interest are the modern buildings of Alexanderplatz and the historic Nikolai district with its thirteenth-century church.

"Without the Ku'damm, there would be no Berlin," a popular saying goes, referring to the Kurfürstendamm, a lively boulevard lined with elegant boutiques and cafés. Here are also the ruins of the Kaiser Wilhelm Memorial Church Tower and the modern Europa Center whose observation deck provides a sweeping view of the new borderless Berlin.

THE EAST

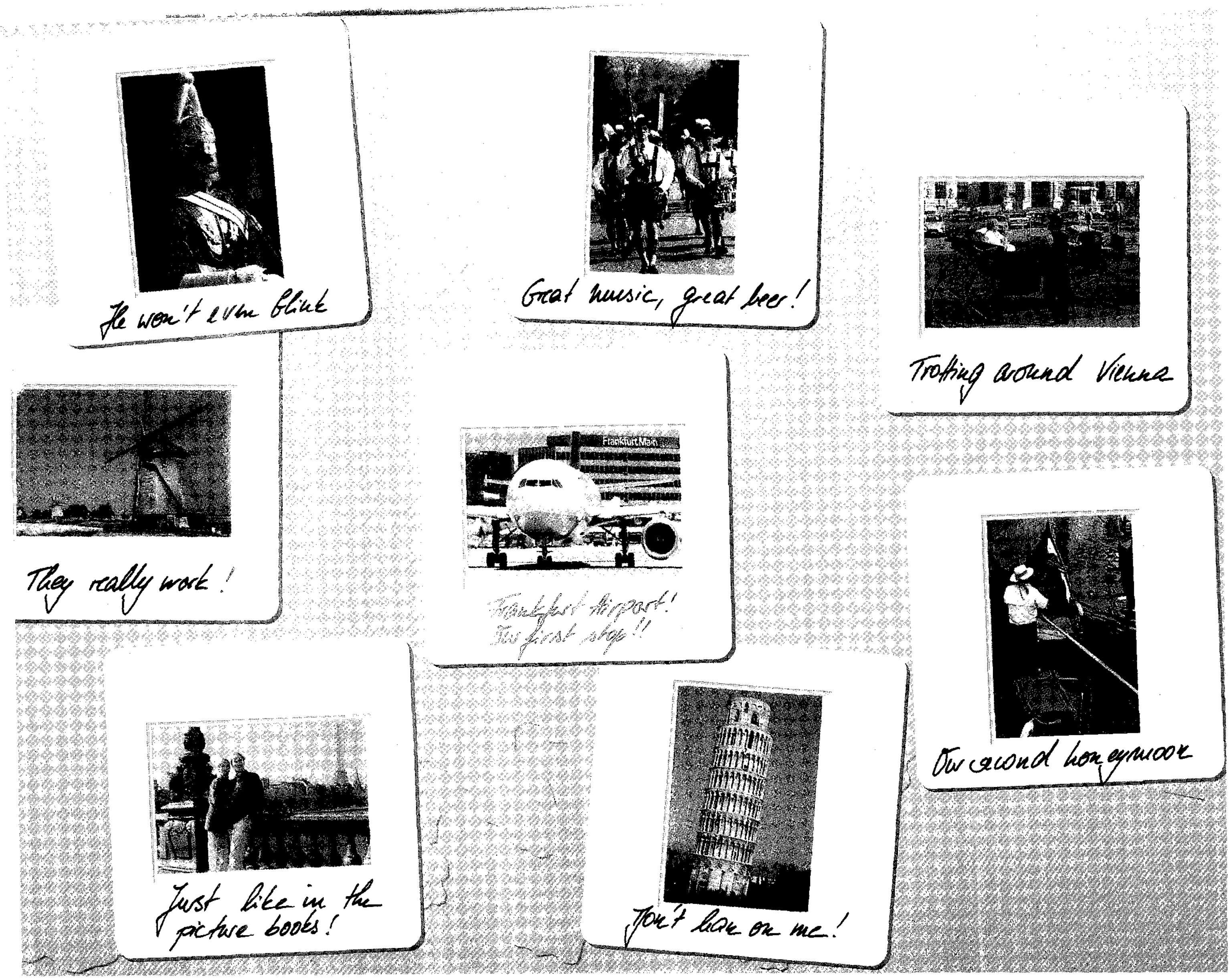
Potsdam is best known for having hosted Truman and Stalin, but its palette of pastel-colored rococo edifices harks back to the eighteenth century. Here Prussian monarchs assembled a lavish complex of palaces. Sans Souci Park is notable not only for its manicured gardens but also for the spectacular summer palace built by Frederick the Great. A nearby picture gallery, with works by the old masters, is also worth a visit, as is the Orangerie, a nineteenth-century copy of an Italian Renaissance palace.

Dresden, known as "Florence of the Elbe," is worth visiting for its profusion of art treasures and its fabled baroque skyline. Chief delights are the Semper Opera House, one of Europe's grandest, and the eighteenth-century baroque Zwinger Palace, a fanciful palace for festivals and concerts.

Then there is Leipzig, home to one of Germany's oldest universities. It was also a mecca of literature and music. Stop at the Kaffeebaum, an old pub, and you may be sitting in the spot frequented by Goethe, Liszt, or Schumann. Continue the Goethe trail to the Madler Passage — and find the cellar that inspired a famous scene in Faust.

Residents stroll through town

Leipzig's most famous musician is, without doubt, J. S. Bach, who is buried at St. Thomas's Church, where he worked from 1723 until his death in 1750. This city takes music seriously; witness the celebrated Gewandhaus Orchestra and the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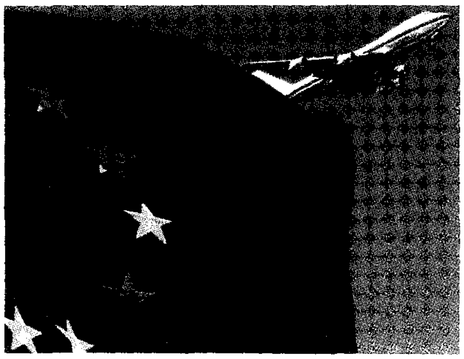

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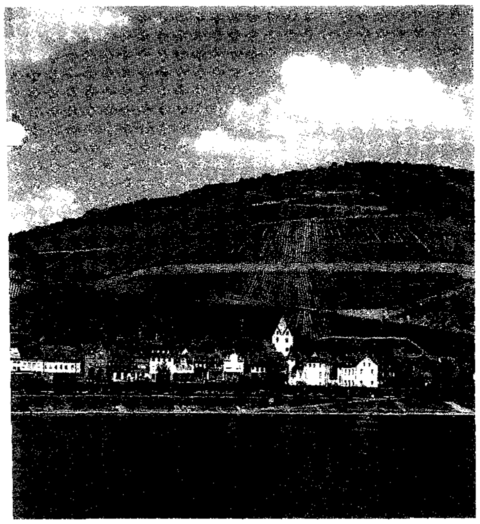
Thomanerchor, a boys choir in existence for almost eight hundred years.

Another native son who left his mark here is Martin Luther. Trace the progress of the Reformation; Wittenberg, for example, where the church door on which Luther nailed his ninety-five theses in 1517 can be seen today. Nestled in the nearby Harz Mountains are towns such as Quedlinburg and Wernigerode, renowned for their timbered medieval houses and gothic structures.


The Rhine's riverside scenery is spectacular

Thuringia is known as the "green heart of Germany" for its vast protected forests. Luther sought refuge here at Wartburg Castle. Other vestiges of that era are found in the timbered buildings that line the Kramer Bridge in Erfurt, the region's official capital. Weimar, the ducal seat, has museums dedicated to Goethe and Schiller.

THE NORTH

Centuries ago, the poet and critic Heinrich Heine described Hamburg as "the best republic — its manners are from England and its food from Heaven." Hamburg is more than just a thriving port — though that would certainly be enough. Harbor tours depart frequently from the docks of St. Pauli, which is also famed as a notorious red-light district. Jazz and pop music clubs abound; after all, it was here that the Beatles embarked on their international career. After a Saturday night on the town, a popular outing is the early Sunday morning auction at St. Pauli's fish market, actually a flea market-cum-circus that runs from 6:00 A.M. to 9:30 A.M.

Explore along the banks of the city's main artery, the Elbe. About eight miles from downtown is Blankenese, a former fishing village that's now among the city's most desirable residential areas. Here are picturesque cottages, outdoor fish restaurants, and terraced hills dotted with villas.

For a trip back to the age of the medieval Hanseatic League, visit its traditional capital, nearby Lübeck. It is famous both for its fifteenth-century Holsten gate and as the setting for Thomas Mann's "Buddenbrooks." On the Lüneburger Heide, a heath south of Hamburg, visitors can take carriage rides through fields of heather; further south is Celle, one of the best-preserved medieval towns in Germany. And east of Hamburg are Schwerin, noted for its immense castle, the Baltic seaport of Rostock, and the distinctive chalk cliffs of the island of Rügen.

THE WEST AND THE RHINE

The western region is sliced by great rivers — the Rhine, the Mosel, and the Neckar — giving it rolling scenery and vineyard-draped slopes.

Frankfurt, on the Main, is the traditional financial capital and international gateway of Germany — the airport is used by more than ninety carriers serving some 215 destinations. The city's illustrious past is hinted at by the recently restored old quarters. One of its newer features is a Jewish Museum. Frankfurt is also a gateway to wine country.

The Neckar River, to the south, flows through the town of Heidelberg, the setting for "The Student Prince" and one of the few spots in Germany to escape destruction in World War II. Notable here are the enormous red sandstone castle overlooking the town, the Philosopher's Way, and the marketplace.

Then there is the Rhine. Take a detour from the picture-book landscape to visit one of the many wine towns clinging to the banks. A dedicated oenophile would have to go no farther from Frankfurt than Rüdesheim to sample the best of the grape.

There's more wine country in the Mosel valley, whose towns — such as Bernkastel-Kues and Zell — are well known to aficionados. And don't miss Cologne; its splendid Gothic cathedral is an impressive sight.

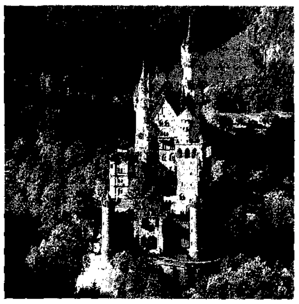
BAVARIA AND THE SOUTH

Oktoberfest in Munich

This is the Germany of guidebook fame. Frothy steins of beer served by dirndl-clad waitresses, Ludwig's fantasy castles, Alpine villages — it is all here. Beer, in fact, defines Bavaria much as wine does the Rhineland. Songs and festivals were created in its honor, and beer halls are the scene of some of the major events in the region.

You don't have to come during Oktoberfest to celebrate the brew — just sample it at any of the gymnasium-size halls that are located in the center of Munich. But this is not just a town of beer halls. Munich has a sophisticated cultural scene, boasting many galleries and art museums, including the incomparable Alte Pinakotek. The onion-spired churches and elegant façades and boulevards exemplify the city's dramatic postwar restoration.

The fancies of Ludwig II of Bavaria took flight in the construction of such extravagant palaces as Neuschwanstein, Chiemsee, and Linderhof. South Germany also offers the Romantic Road, a lane that snakes through medieval gems like Rothenburg, Dinkelsbühl, Nördlingen, and Augsburg. Garmisch-Partenkirchen is Germany's top Alpine resort, a place where traditional costumes can be seen alongside skiwear.


Neuschwanstein Castle

In the valley of the Danube, another river joining west with east, are the ancient Roman city of Regensburg and centuries-old Passau, a departure point for steamer cruises down the river to Vienna.

Barbara Sturken is a free-lance writer based in New York City.

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Any time of year,
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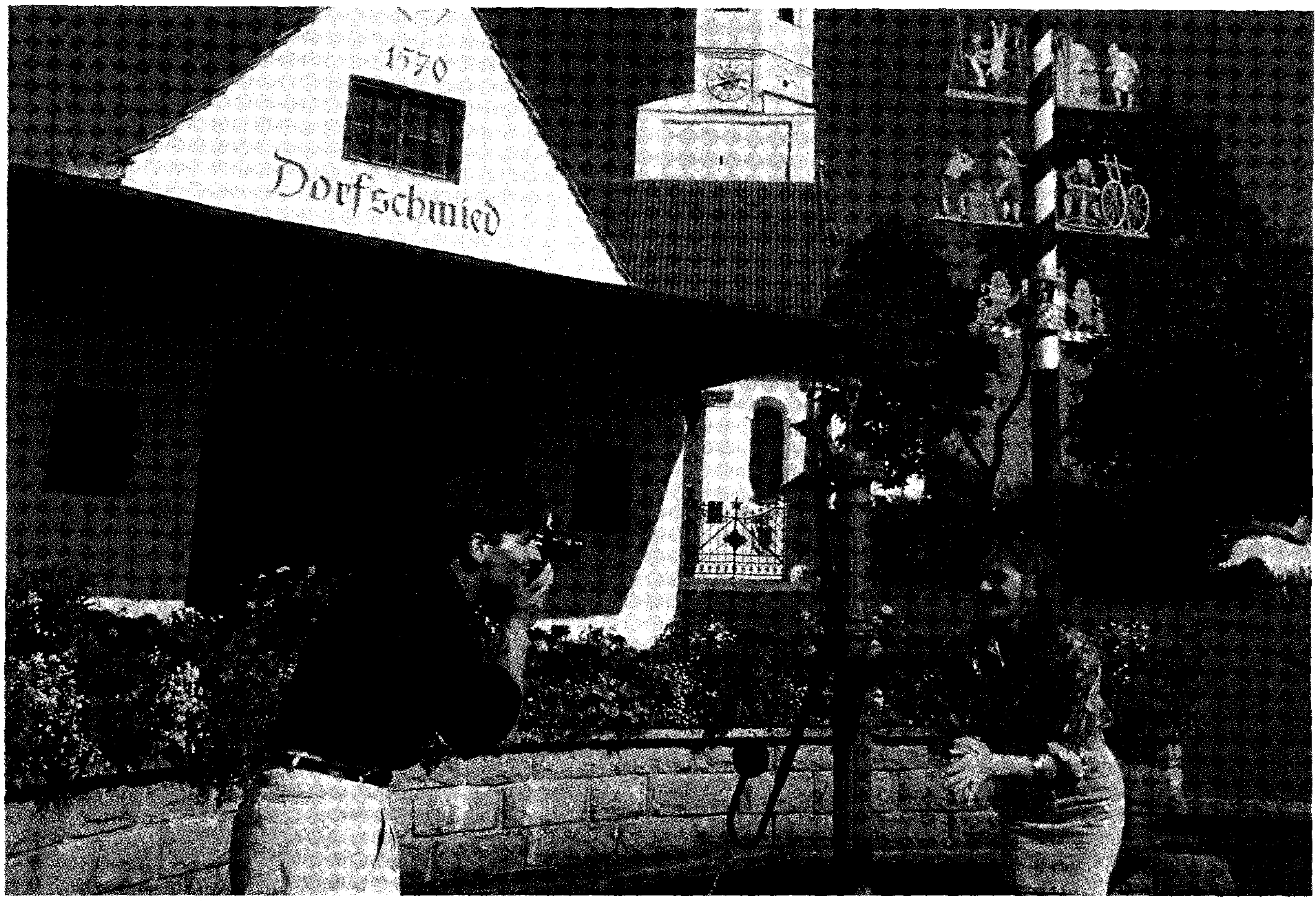

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DZT German National Tourist Office

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across the street. This, the court ruled, "falsely leads people to believe that a Big Mac can replace friends and ease loneliness." But isn't that the point of advertising? We're used to being told that a car equals frequent sexual relations, not that it's a way to transport your body and your belongings around town. Perhaps you could even argue that this is good—that if your particular brand of beer makes you feel like a cowboy, or a tweedy professor in a bar, or a flat-bellied beach-volleyball star, that's a bonus.

A new trend is emerging, though, especially on the myriad unpolished cable channels that fill so much of the dial. On these channels—the shopping networks, the channels that devote half their day to infomercials—you are more and more encouraged to buy simply because the very act of buying will make you feel good. It's quite early in the morning on "Home Shopping Spree," and a toy panda named Bobo is wandering across the room. "He comes to you from China, where his real counterparts have lived for thousands of years," the host says, and he then starts touting the Exertrack folding treadmill. "It has been *medically supported* that walking is one of the best exercises you can do," he says. Lucia calls in from Long Island to acquire one, and she chats with the announcer about his station. "It's very nice," she says. "You can get up at four-thirty in the morning and order something really nice."

Psychologists (and debt counsellors) have been talking about "shopaholics" for some years now, and people have been wearing T-shirts that say "Shop till you drop," and so on. But merchants have thought it prudent at least to pretend that their products satisfied a need—if not a physical need, then a psychological one. To some extent, this pretense endures, even on the shopping channels, but it grows balder. "Are you bugged by something? Well, it just might be that your finger needs a diamond ring," one shopping-channel host said. A few hours later, another saleswoman described this picture of happiness: "You're wearing the ring on your finger, and driving in your car, kind of gazing at the ring, enjoying your drive, enjoying your ring. And then you get to the store, and maybe you're writing a check, and you just kind of put your hand down to write the check, and the girl behind the counter says, 'Whoa, beautiful jewelry.' And you say, 'Oh, yes, thank you. It's from QVC; it's for me!'" More and more, though, even the status and the self-respect offered by the product take a back seat to the pleasure of the moment of purchase. In a way, they have to. On the shopping channels, there's no tangible item for you to hold; gratification is delayed for at least as long as it takes United Parcel Service to find you. But you can be part of the fun of *buying:* of calling in right before the *deadline*, of watching the host *lower* the price as the minutes tick away, of being included on the tote board that shows how many others have bought this item. (In ten minutes, more than thirty-five hundred people ordered a smokeless stovetop grill.) Two of the QVC hostesses convene for a little chat.

Kathy: "Molly, I love to shop, in case you don't know that."

Molly: "Yeah, I think shopping is just an adaptation of the basic hunting instinct."

Kathy: "Yeah. Kill, kill, kill!"

Molly: "The bloodless hunt!"

The trailer for the movie "Pretty Woman" was shown over and over on May 3rd: Richard Gere was telling the manager of a Rodeo Drive store, "We need some more people sucking up to us, because we're going to be spending obscene amounts of money." And we laughed, seeing ourselves. Only a society where the very idea of "need" had been banished could offer a market for, say, William Davis, group captain and former Spitfire ace, who appears regularly to offer a coin commemorating the Battle of Britain. It's "valid legal tender" (in the Marshall Islands). Here's someone to sell a coat hanger that won't "rust and dirty your clothes." (I have never seen a rusty coat hanger.) Already owning something is no reason not to buy it again: "The Regina Housekeeper makes an excellent second vacuum, maybe to put upstairs," and "You can't have enough white slacks—it's always a good idea to take a second pair with you when you're travelling," and "Some Armani would be a nice gift, even if it isn't his *main* fragrance." Pearle Vision *insists* that you need two pairs of glasses, so that your frames can match your mood. Shopping channels are a test of resis-

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HAPPY CONCEPTION DAY !!

tance, a siren song that eventually lures all who aren't lashed to their recliners. Watch these channels long enough and eventually you give in, go into a frenzy, like the winners on "Supermarket Sweeps," who are stuffing lobsters up their shirts and steaks down their pants.

Even simpler than the shopping channels, even more primal, are the half-hour infomercials that eat up vast chunks of the television day. State legislators and attorneys general and others of that ilk regularly call for laws to drive these shows off the air, on the theory they are duping idiot consumers, who think them to be "real" TV shows, and not advertisements. I find this hard to believe, because the infomercials are so forthrightly enthusiastic about the process of selling. Their announcers, many of whom come from Europe (which seems to command some vestigial deference), descend directly from the guys at the state fair demonstrating the new Miracle Juicer with eleventeen blades and three reverse gears. A few of the infomercials—especially those offering cassette courses to help you "Raise Drug-Free Kids" or "Light His Fire" or study just "30 Days to Unlimited Success"—seem veiled and creepy. But most are likably obvious—exploded diagrams of desire. "Breakthrough" opens with shots of cigarette boats jumping waves, and girls in bikinis, and zooming helicopters, but then the host, Joe McKenzie, gets serious. Today, he's selling Dynafoam cleaning powder. Milt Young, the president of Dynafoam, spends a few minutes demonstrating its utility. It can clean carpets and tile and mirrors! (Is there anything that can't clean mirrors?) But the real drama comes halfway through the show, when it's time to announce the price.

"How much?" asks Joe.

"One bottle, three hundred and thirty-nine dollars and ninety-five cents," Milt says, to gasps of disbelief. "Wait a minute, you misunderstand me," he says. "Three hundred thirty-nine is what you would pay if you bought all these other cleaners from the store." He offers a price of $39.95, but the disgruntled audience shouts "No!"

"Let me tell you how this works," Joe says. "I've got millions and millions of folks out there in television land who are looking for you and me to bring them a breakthrough, a breakthrough event, O.K.? I need for you to sweeten up the offer, to make a move."

"In our warehouse," Milt says, "we just happen to have a supply of these hangers, these are these closet-saver expanders that double, triple, quadruple your closet space. I'm willing to throw in one of these."

"What about the one on the floor?"

"Boy, you're tough."

"I sure am. This is a big deal."

But the audience is still restive, even after Milt tosses in the second hanger *and* a Discover America Travel Package, which offers hotel discounts.

"I got to tell you," Joe says. "I'm relatively impressed. But I don't have a breakthrough moment yet. You have to dig down deep, to make it possible for millions and millions. Make the big move, make the grand gesture, do something outrageous. Make it happen."

"How many can I sell?" Milt asks.

"Give me the right deal and we'll sell millions."

The crowd, which knows its part, since it never varies from show to show, is chanting "Breakthrough! Breakthrough! Breakthrough!" Milt tosses in another bottle of Dynafoam and cuts the price ten dollars and it's done. The crowd roars. Joe smiles. Victory. It's not the Dynafoam we want; it's the deal.

The strict functionalism of the wilderness reminds you not to get carried away with psychological needs, to concentrate on what is real and necessary, especially in a world where excess consumption is damaging the planet. (When I was on the mountain, it was instructive to remember that the reason I *needed* a bed was that the ground was hard—though, of course, when you lack a Craftmatic adjustable bed gravity "exerts disturbing pressure on your internal organs.") But only saints and poor people can follow this rule with utter dedication—and often it is especially important to poor people to buy goods that carry status and solace, even if they answer no bodily need. Around where I live, many of the old farmhouses, poor though they were, had marvellous grandfather clocks in the corner, and those clocks meant not time but stability, family tradition, solidity. (QVC sells grandfather clocks for $89.50. "One of the nice things about it is this—most grandfather clocks, if you want to move them you need to get a couple of strong guys. This you can just lift.") Such possessions, even if we don't "need" them, can bring us real pleasure, and such pleasure is not something to be sneered at, especially if you have it under mild control. Some months later, during the recession, I heard a woman on the radio say, with startling honesty, "Now if there's something I don't need, I don't go right out and buy it."

I have bought my share of stuff in the last few years which very soon wound up in the attic, and I'll likely buy more in the future. (Even on the mountain, I was inordinately pleased with my fancy backpack.) It is that other kind of buying, though—the buying simply for the pleasure of the act itself—which the mountains can maybe help heal, in the way that they used to help heal tuberculosis. What sets wilderness apart now is not that it's dangerous (it's almost certainly safer than any town or road) or that it's solitary (you can, so they say, be alone in a crowded room) or full of exotic animals (there are more at the zoo). What sets it apart is that five miles out in the woods you can't buy anything. There's no way to drive someplace and spend some money; you can't even phone a TV channel and place an order. I had seventy-five cents in my pocket, and all day it jangled. It may cost money to get there in the first place, but once you're there commerce is utterly impossible. If you survive the wilderness, you emerge with a useful piece of information about yourself.

BEHIND me, up on the summit of Blackberry Mountain, there's the foundation of an old fire tower, removed years ago by the state. I know the man who used to spend his days in it, watching for smoke. From the window he could see his home, and the house where he was born, and the house where his mother lived her last years, and the church where she was buried (in a service presided over by his daughter). And he could see the houses of several of his sons, and the ridge where he learned to hunt deer, and the lake where he learned to fish. And he knew the land—knew whether smoke from a particular spot was so-and-so burning trash, or whether it was a fire getting out of control. What he *really* knew was this particular place.

The Nostalgia Channel is showing a 1941 musical—John Payne, Alice Faye, and Cesar Romero in "The Great American Broadcast." A story of the early days of radio, it depicts the first broadcast over an improvised network (a Dempsey fight) and the rising wireless fever; people were flushed with excitement because they'd picked up Buffalo on their living-room radios. The triumphant finale comes from the studio where the first coast-to-coast broadcast is taking place, the showstopping number sung before a huge map of America that has a light for every town with a receiving station. When this linking-up of the world first happened, it must have seemed profoundly glamorous. People who had previously been able to hear only from their neighbors could suddenly listen to the nation.

It is often said that television has made the world smaller. The constant implication of our times, stressed with particular persuasiveness by the electronic media, is that the local and the regional matter less and less, and the national and the global more and more. We get to experience this boundless world just by flipping the switch—"the whole world at your fingertips, from the far reaches of outer space to the heart of Fairfax." Ted Turner, the creator of CNN and the incarnation of the information revolution, gave an address that was broadcast on C-SPAN on May 3rd which centered on just this theme. He said that he was imposing small fines at CNN "to eliminate the word 'foreign' when talking about other nations and other individuals on this planet. I think we're all neighbors. . . . Instead of 'foreign' affairs, it should be 'international' affairs. The word 'foreign' has a bad connotation, because it says 'somewhere else.' "

But while we are told each day that the earth is round we've forgotten that it's also flat—local, small, particular. Television tells us we have everything in common. We don't. And as we lose our particularity we collectively lose prodigious amounts of information. The most obvious drain is on our ecological understanding. Each piece of land in the world is different: the climate and the topography and the vegetation all combine to mean that the field over there is especially vulnerable to erosion or that the deer need this bit of

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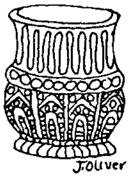
stream or that the groundwater is shallow here and easily depleted. These kinds of lessons—and the affection needed to act on them—can be learned only by long observation. From the ridge on Crow, I can see most of the few dozen houses in my town. They're where they are for some physical reason: the creek drops there, so it was a natural place for a sawmill; there the valley floor broadens enough for a farm. The sawmill is gone and the pasture is growing in, but there's still some logic to the layout, some information provided by the topography and the soil. But farther in the distance I can see the spot where luxury vacation condos will be built next year, right on the edge of a gorgeous but tiny pond. They will be put there for no physical reason save proximity to a ski hill and the increased value of "waterfront," and they're going to be pushed in, one on another, as close as the landscaping will allow. They will tell their inhabitants and their visitors nothing about the land; they are "machines for living," albeit inefficient ones, and quite possibly they will overwhelm that small pond, filling it with enough nitrogen so that it chokes with algae and then dies. Those houses will exist not in a place but only in a brochure and a spiel; they're like the houses advertised ceaselessly on Fairfax's real-estate channel, whose sites are described primarily in relation to the human world—"near the mall," "on a cul-de-sac."



We tend to recognize this loss of information, of localness, more in cultural than in environmental terms. Once in a great while, someone comes on TV speaking in a distinct regional accent, and you suddenly realize how rare it is; such speakers tend to be country singers, or poor people who have been unexpectedly caught in natural disasters (like a woman in flood-stricken Eufaula, Oklahoma, who said, "The house is ruint, the floor is ruint, so I guess we'll just have to find another place to live"). Also elderly Southern politicians, and rap musicians like D-Nice, whose video appeared on "Yo! MTV Raps." He held up a New York subway map and rapped, "I live in the Bronx, by the D and the 4 / Writing lyrics is addictive, writing more and more and more." But these are rare exceptions. In all these hundreds and thousands of hours of TV, the only reminder that Fairfax County sits south of the Mason-Dixon Line was an advertisement for a product called Goody's Headache Powder, "The Number One Headache Powder in the South."

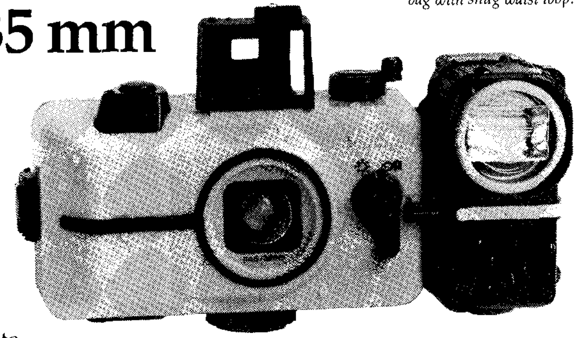
The widely reported notion that, instead of living in particular and distinct places, we all now live together in a "global village" was first put forward by Marshall McLuhan in the nineteen-sixties. "Today, after more than a century of electric technology, we have extended our central nervous system itself in a global embrace, abolishing both space and time as far as our planet is concerned," he wrote. "The new electric interdependence recreates the world in the image of a global village." What an attractive idea! We can follow the modern, commercial, political impulse toward globalization, toward standardization, and, in the process, create the intimacy of a village, the kind of close and connected personal and cultural life we've been vaguely missing. It sounds awfully good for other reasons, too. It sounds like the way we're going to solve our worst political problems, so many of which (the environment, nuclear weapons) are global in scale. And in this image, quite explicitly, the TV is a sort of campfire, and also a set of jungle drums bearing the news. With television uniting us into a "single consciousness," McLuhan says, we'll turn from our preoccupations with self, which he sees as decadent, to a primitive wholeness.

Assume for a moment that this is true, and lay aside the obvious objection that such a trend is anti-individual. The question is: What aspects of a village can be usefully translated to an almost infinitely larger scale? What is a village? What is a tribe? When people in villages traditionally got together to talk, they talked about what they had in common. That is to say, they talked about what the weather was like and what it meant for the crops; they talked about what the people in the next village were up to and if they meant harm; they talked about who in town was causing trouble and who needed help. The talk had real content, and the smaller the village was, the deeper the content, because everyone could agree on what was important; the talk was rooted in the particular facts of its local existence.

By contrast, it obviously makes little sense for the global village to talk about the weather, since while some are harvesting others are planting; we could and should talk about the greenhouse effect, since it's a form of international weather, but we rarely do. And since, as Ted Turner makes clear, one of the pieties of the global village is that there are no other tribes (especially now that the Iron Curtain tribe has given in and switched on CNN, too), there's usually no great threat to discuss. When there is, the limits on our global village become evident. During the war with Iraq, which was portrayed as a moment of great international community, a lot of the people in the Arab countries and much of the Third World seem to have been repelled by our conduct. Many Americans looked at CNN and swelled with pride at our smart bombs; many people elsewhere looked at CNN and swelled with indignation at the sight of high technology destroying hapless conscripts.

Since we must restrict our conversation to what we have in common, our global-village campfires are not as productive as the old tribal ones were. We can find subjects of interest to all only by *erasing* content, paring away information—the things that interest me may not interest you, or even be comprehensible to you. A couple of years ago, for instance, Britain was rife with rumors that McDonald's was sending money to the Irish Republican Army; it turned out that CNN had reported that the hamburger giant had been contributing to its employees' Individual Retirement Accounts. This was a mixup involving two of the nations on earth that have the most in common, including a language; the only solution is to simplify.

You can observe this trend away from content almost every time you go to the movies. As foreign audiences have grown much larger (and perhaps as America has grown less distinctive), producers and directors have had to flatten out their films—to set them in more ecumenical places, or at least in the most internationally familiar parts of America. "We have to consider the global market, and we absolutely need more universal stories now," a producer told an interviewer recently. "It will be harder to sell a purely American story of an Iowa farmer than something of broader interest." Demo-



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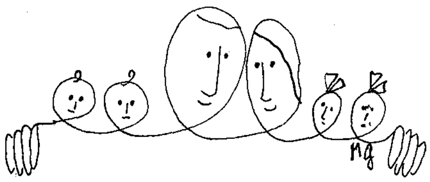
graphics dominate, and content—information—necessarily shrinks.

Which is not to say that McLuhan was wrong. We do have a global village, more and more of one all the time. Its content is one of the few things that can be successfully translated across languages, customs, climates, political tendencies, religions, and the other varied circumstances of people's lives—a certain range of consumer products. This we can all agree on: Levi's are cool. Big Mac. Coke adds life. (According to legend, though, when that particular slogan was translated into one African language it read "Coke brings your ancestors back from the dead.") The global village relentlessly roots out the real villages that still remain, and drains away their content, their information. Even in the poorest countries, advertising is inescapable. An article in the Canadian magazine *Adbusters* says that advertising in the Ivory Coast "is helping to change the Ivorian attitude toward aging, making women fear looking older and undermining the traditional respect for elders"—effects that, of course, represent a significant loss of information, since the old people are the wise people, the people who understand the land. And the village fabric is unravelled in other ways. "Traditionally, drinks are consumed only in social settings, as evidenced by the large pot where they are stored," the article goes on. "Yet the advertising of Coca-Cola and Heineken portrays drinking as an individual act rather than a collective one." Instead of the dense and chewy content that a local culture develops over many generations to serve its particular survival needs, there is only the sugary-sweet, bright-colored, gossamer-light content of the global village: Coke is it. Yet, having undermined these cultures, we now yearn for them. All day long, the Travel Channel offered documentaries that play on our strong desire to see *differences*, to see lives lived in interesting, un-American ways: "Another sort of Spain is waiting to be discovered if you take the trouble to travel beyond the beaches—an older, calmer Spain."

A day of television reminds you that, except for whatever specialty you earn your living with, you live in a vastly simpler place than the local, particular, information-soaked environments of our ancestors—a place where your physical location hardly matters. We dwell at the intersection of "Oprah" and "Love Connection," of "General Hospital" and "Hawaii Five-0" and "She's the Sheriff," all of which make as much sense in Seattle as they do in Miami, all of which can be dubbed or copied around the planet and enjoyed by people who inhabit the same general placelessness. All of which can be understood by twelve-year-olds and ninety-year-olds. All of which can be understood in a matter of seconds by someone who switched them on halfway through. If my endless day of television convinced me of anything, it's that the electronic media have become an environment of their own—that to the list of neighborhood and region and continent and planet we must now add television as a place where we live.

5 P.M.: "Dance Party U.S.A." is at the beach today. Jet skis career through the waves; on the shore, it's an hour of teen-agers dancing nonstop to the hits of the moment. Almost all the boys are wearing jams and big, breezy shirts; so are the few stout girls. The other girls are mostly in bikinis or Lycra shorts, or something similar. The music never stops, and no one talks much. It's just an endless roving camera shot of young bodies—of breasts quivering, and butts, and thighs. Except for a few obvious ringers, none of the dancers are professionals; most of them, in fact, aren't even very talented amateurs. As the hour wears on, a kind of trance seems to settle over the action. In part, I think, this must be due to the difficulty of strenuous dancing on loose sand. But the kids have, or so I imagine, a slightly baffled look—a "What am I doing here?" blankness in their eyes. Which is entirely appropriate, for almost nowhere else have we managed to strip away meaning and information as thoroughly as in music and dance, and especially the music and dance that appear most often on television—the really popular stuff.

Music pounds from the television around the clock. Four networks—MTV, VH1, the Nashville Network, and Country Music Television—devote themselves entirely to videos. And almost all this music and dance is popular. Though the broadcast media began with classical music, that music has now nearly vanished. I liked a lot of the hits everyone was playing—it's what I'm used to, the sort of music I grew up hearing. But it is popular—that is, "of the people"—only in a peculiar, blanched fashion.



Oprah's guests this afternoon are all songwriters, and at one point she turns to them and says, "How do you know what to write a song about?" Then she answers her own question: "There's only so many things you can sing about. If it weren't for love, what would we sing about?" Music has been slowly divested of subject matter. Most really popular songs are no longer about God or nature or work or anger or harvest or politics or death. If you spend twenty-four hours in front of MTV, you will, I think, agree with Oprah that most of the lyrics, and even more of the visual images, concern themselves with romantic love. And even that veneer is falling away—they are about sex, really.

There was a time when this liberation was real and necessary—the time when Elvis swivelled, maybe. But you can't be released when you are not bound, and by now sex has washed most other meaning out of the music. When you live in the age of videos, there's not even a chance of ambiguity. The pictures are as much a part of the song as the tune; you're *told* what the music's about. If you heard Billy Idol singing "Cradle of Love" on the radio, it might trigger many associations. But on video it is a leering "Cat in the Hat." A girl in a miniskirt visits her neighbor, a lonely yuppie. She puts on a tape and starts dancing around the apartment and doing a striptease; then she's writhing on the bed, crawling on all fours, kissing the confused neighbor, and finally flouncing off and leaving him—and the viewer—hot and bothered. Now it's time for "Club MTV," and Mr. Lee singing his hit "Pump That Body": "Houston, pump that body! Phoenix, work that body! Minneapolis, pump that body!" Young MC is rapping, "You're on a mission and you're wishing / someone could cure your lonely condition / Looking for love in all the wrong places / No find girls, just ugly faces / From frustration first inclination / Is to become a monk and leave the situation / But every dark color has a lighter hope / So don't hang yourself with a celibate rope." Winger's video features a girl on her hands and knees on a pool table—"I need your love, I need your skin, I need you baby to let me in." Lita Ford is straightforward—"I'm so hungry for your sex"—and so is MTV: the "word of the week" on the channel is "callipygous," which means "having shapely buttocks," which every woman on MTV does. I suppose I don't spend as much time as I should thinking how offensive these videos are—they know what buttons to push. Were one video in twenty like these, then maybe you could say, "Well, that's part of life, sure." But it's relentless: for hours on end, that's pretty much all there is. That's all the information these videos carry.

"It's a fabulous deal. You'll make peanuts."

• •

8 P.M.: While I was resting by the pond, Saddam Hussein invaded Kuwait. I didn't know it at the time, of course—didn't know it until I hiked out of the woods and my wife told me. Then my first impulse was to turn on the radio, and I kept it on for what seemed like most of the next six months. Here was the information age in its finest hour—all the world tuned in to CNN, raw data, not filtered through commercials or sitcoms, streaming in real time around the globe.

A few months earlier, on May 3rd, very little of lasting significance happened—a slow news day. Not that that reduced the volume of coverage, however. TV's critics constantly complain about the lack of news and public affairs on TV, comparing it to a diet of junk food. In truth, there's a torrent of news on TV—a steady force-feeding of slightly sugarcoated Shredded Wheat. The local CBS affiliate, WUSA, for instance, shows eleven and a half hours of regional and national news and interview shows every day. May 3rd was a Thursday, however, so add an hour for "48 Hours," which focussed on the victims of violent crime. And CBS, like the other networks, dutifully replaced most of "Sally Jessy Raphael" with live coverage of an excruciatingly dull Presidential press conference, in which Mr. Bush made the unsurprising announcement that he wasn't going to upgrade a kind of missile called the Lance, which was sitting in West Germany aimed at what was very soon not going to be East Germany anymore. In other words, WUSA offered more than thirteen hours of news.

Besides the networks, CNN and CNN's Headline News provided twenty-four hours a day of coverage. Many of the various cable channels also ran "news updates" during the day. For instance, on Lifetime, which targets women, an anchorperson came on for twenty seconds every couple of hours to tell about a new Danish drug that fights osteoporosis, and the USA Network news update at 11 A.M. offered one story: "After six years, Burger King is dropping Pepsi and returning to Coke." Each of the colleges in the area also provided a newscast, on which students showed how well they had mastered the conventions of the profession. (Snappy transitions, for example: "In sports, Mother Nature beats the Dukes on the diamond. More coming up when we return.") This eerie slickness enveloped even the student-produced news from Fairhill Elementary School. "Yo, couch potatoes!" a fifth grader said. "It's time for the Couch Potato Movie Review—'Gods Must Be Crazy II.' " (The Fairhill news team also offered breaking stories—"Today, for lunch, you'll be having chicken nuggets with hot, flaky biscuits and choice of two: oven fries, fresh orange wedges, apple juice, chef's salad.") And what, exactly, does all this information leave you with? Not, at least in my case, with the feeling that I understood how the world had changed that day, much less how the world worked.

Perhaps the greatest distortion of TV news comes from the very fact of its seeming comprehensiveness. Each day, it fills its allotted hours no matter what, and each day it fills them with a crackling urgency. A newspaper comes out every day, too, but a newspaper has various ways of letting you know whether or not an event is important. The single most useful thing about the *Times* is that the width and type size of the lead headline each morning let you know how it compares, in the view of the paper's editors, with all the other lead stories since the *Times* began. It has a way of saying to its readers, "Nothing earthshaking happened today; it's O.K. to read the reviews or the sports." TV has almost no flexibility of this sort.

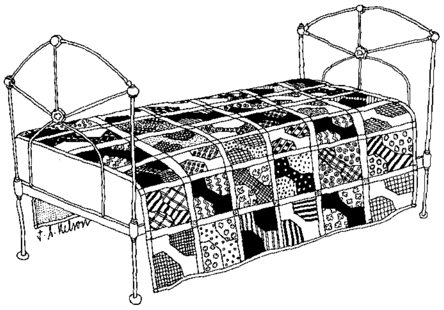
Something always happens, of course. On May 3rd, it was President Bush's unsurprising announcement about missiles. Also, Lithuania's Prime Minister Kazimiera Prunskiene made a very inconclusive visit to the White House, where she and the President spoke a lot of diplomatic language; and the former hostage Frank Reed waved at newsmen from the balcony of a military hospital in Wiesbaden; and a fire spread in the Everglades; and flooding in Texas and Oklahoma swept away several cars; and the Dow closed up 6.53, at 2696.17; and contractors who outfitted Donald Trump's Taj Mahal casino said he owed them thirty-five million dollars; and an Amtrak train went off the tracks, but not disastrously. All in all, considering the twentieth century, a pretty calm day. No new wars, no massacres, no natural disasters causing deaths in the double digits. And yet from the look on Dan Rather's face you'd have thought he was F.D.R. and it had been a day of infamy. It's not that the newscast was vapid; like each of the network newscasts, it carried several decent feature stories. But there was no way to put them in perspective.

TV congratulates itself endlessly on its commitment to urgency. The promos and opening titles for nearly every local newscast showed its square-jawed personnel out battling the clock to bring back film, and the film being edited by frantic technicians while the heroic correspondents batted out copy on flashing screens; and, finally, the anchor settled into the anchor throne, took a second to gather her breath, and launched into her report. Such grace under pressure! Such valiance in pursuit of truth! It's as if you went to Dunkin' Donuts and the guy behind the counter thought you'd enjoy your breakfast more if he showed you a video of himself arriving in the predawn darkness to personally inject the jelly filling.

Some subjects are themselves suited to this kind of jangle. All day, TV provided excellent coverage of the flooding in Texas and Oklahoma, gathering all the expected footage: policemen going down streets in rowboats and using bullhorns to persuade reluctant residents to evacuate their homes; families trucking their furniture away as the water rose; volunteers carrying old folks out of nursing homes; tired people huddled in school gymnasiums sipping Red Cross coffee and making plans to go home. TV excels at covering disasters, both natural and human. Given a volcano, a massacre in an interesting country like China, or a police beating captured on videotape, TV will bring it home. The lava oozes toward the recliner; the nightstick thuds against the ottoman. The TV provides a great common reference.

But the worst disasters move much more slowly, and thereby sneak past the cameras. I want to look very briefly at two of these giant glaciers which are slowly, patiently, methodically changing the topography of the world around us: the decay of the global environment, and the wicked poverty that traps so much of the country and the planet. Everyone, including the people who produce news programs, recognizes the seriousness of what is happening, and yet television fails to get it across. Television doesn't just fail to solve these problems; it fails even to make them understood. This is in part because what is happening occurs on time scales that defy television's relentless dailiness. Covering the greenhouse effect obviously matters more than covering a flood: its consequences are a million times as great, and, since we can take steps to prevent it, there's reason to cover it. But the greenhouse effect doesn't change from day to day. The only points of entry for the story are heat waves and new scientific studies, and, thanks to them, this behemoth of stories does pop up from time to time and let out a growl. But we need to hear it roar. Here TV's vaunted immediacy is a curse, and even newspapers can't help much; you need a book or a documentary to see time unfold over decades. Something that is happening constantly and all around lulls the camera. You can't dash off in a helicopter to track down global warming; you need to sit quietly in a chair and think.

The story of poverty and its attendant sadnesses presents a slightly different but equally illustrative problem. Here there is no shortage of hooks for stories. Every unemployment report or new set of data about infant-mortality rates in the inner cities or fresh footage of famine in Africa offers another chance for a feature on young men who have never held a job or young mothers who have never been to a doctor or babies with swollen bellies. And TV tries to provide these stories—the criticism that it's interested only in "feel good" stories is simply unfair. But the medium is so big that each of these stories has to be about a class of people—the woes of the chronically unemployed, young mothers and their problems, the starving in Africa—instead of about particular people. As a result, the stories dramatically understate the idiosyncrasy and inherent messiness of human lives—especially lives lived under grinding stress.



On "Nine Broadcast Plaza," an interview show on one of the superstations, a reporter was interviewing three elderly people—Mr. R., Mrs. S., and Mrs. L.—who had been abused by their children. Mr. R. and Mrs. L. were wearing enormous black sunglasses, apparently in the belief that this would disguise them. The host was in high dudgeon before the interviews even began, telling horror stories about "an explosion of violent abuse" that had left one woman so badly beaten that she was found "with ants crawling through her wounds." Unfortunately for the host, it turned out that Mr. R. had not been hit by his son. "He never hurt me, he never tried to hit me. Just talking. . . . He'd say, 'I am the boss here, and as far as I'm concerned I don't like you too much.'. . . One time, he has the courage to say, 'If you die, I won't be at your funeral.' "

"Are you afraid of your son?" the host asked.

"Oh, no way, I am not afraid."

Turning to Mrs. L., the host asked, "Who is doing the abusing in your case?" Well, no one was actually abusing her—her son was taking drugs, and that was placing stress on her. "Have you had *physical symptoms* from this stress?" the host demanded.

"They thought I had a heart attack, but I didn't," she said.

As for Mrs. S., her daughter was "the devil." By doing "common labor," Mrs. S. had saved half a million dollars, she said. She bought a car for her son, one for herself, and two for her daughter, but her daughter still hated her, threatened to hurt her, and talked about having her committed.

After a break, the guests were joined by two social workers, and the host turned to them. "These, again, are examples of emotional abuse," the host said. "This is only one part of the problem. *Physical abuse* can be even more devastating. What are some of the examples of that, and the statistics of that?"

Well, one of the social workers said, only about a quarter of the cases of abuse of the elderly involve violence, but "a larger percentage are actually cases of neglect, where there are actual acts of omission causing injury to the older person, as well as death."

The host listened for a while, and asked a few more questions, but before long he returned to Mr. R. "Although your son never said, 'I'm going to hit you,' you were led to believe he might hurt you. Where did you feel you could turn when you first heard that?"

"Well, I don't believe he's tried to hurt me," Mr. R. said. "But you never can tell."

These people were quite clearly victims of tragedies. But they weren't the right tragedies, the ones scheduled for today. And they weren't the sort of tragedies that ever show up on TV—except maybe in the soap operas—because they were too particular. You need a novel to explain why Mr. R.'s son doesn't want to come to his funeral, and TV has no patience for novels—not even the small novels a good newspaper columnist provides. And, without this novelistic sense of life's particularities, most of the solutions that we try to design will fail.

You *can* get some sense from television of just how messy and complicated life can be, but only by doing whatever the electronic equivalent is of reading between the lines—looking in the corners, maybe. For instance, a lot of the late-night ads I watched were clearly aimed at Washington's poor, not Fairfax's rich. Here's a company that lets you "rent to own" over a period of months. A Samsung TV-VCR is only $18.95 a week—and by the time you own it you'll have paid $1,478.10 plus tax. The company will also rent you "gold jewelry" for $13.99 a week. "You need the respect a credit card can give you," the next ad tells you—there's an almost palpable sense of constant financial strain, of always being short, of the understandable, warping desire for all that you see advertised each day. A young man is advertising last-resort auto insurance. He has had seven accidents, he says with a rueful grin, and he hit a police car. "But my lady won't walk anywhere." Or turn on "Jeopardy!" and listen to contestants tell Alex Trebek what they do for a living; along with jury selection, this is one of the few moments when the lives of ordinary people are treated as if they were of interest. On tonight's program, Doug says his job is "to chase after ex-husbands who don't pay child support and alimony," and John helps companies look after "de-staffing"—two professions that give you a sense of what's going on in parts of our society. Or watch the sign-off sermon on Channel 32, delivered by an aged black pastor. It's on the topic "Praising God *Anyhow*."

The principal boast of electronic communication is speed, and speed doesn't help much in grasping some situations. Many of us tell ourselves that we need such constant updating so that we'll be able to cope with the "rapidly changing future." But it's not as if, by watching every moment of television, or reading every newspaper, you could really glimpse what the future holds. This television day came only three months before Saddam's invasion of Kuwait, the biggest news event in years, and no one even mentioned Iraq. Well, almost no one. A thin old man in a vested suit named Dr. Charles Taylor did appear on a program called "Bible Prophecy Today," and he said that Iraq was trying to get "nuclear triggers," and that it had a chemical capability, and that it would soon attack Israel—the fall would be "the most likely time." Dr. Taylor wasn't entirely right—he had Egypt on the wrong side, and he didn't mention Kuwait, and he said George Washington had had visions of nuclear attacks on America. But watching the tape of his analysis of newspaper reports—"President Hussein . . . has long been seen by Arab and Western diplomats as harboring ambitions to dominate the region"—during the following winter as Scuds were slamming into Tel Aviv certainly added some zip to his tag line, "I'll see you next week—or I'll see you in glory!" I don't mean that Dan Rather *should* have known that Saddam Hussein was going to invade Kuwait—the *Times* didn't know, and the State Department hadn't a clue, nor the C.I.A. And Dr. Charles Taylor clearly had well-placed sources. I mean only that watching the news on the theory that you'll find out what's going to happen is like buying a truckload of Coke because one of the cans might be the million-dollar prize-winner.

It's undeniable that if you spent a lot

"Culture is the habit of being pleased with the best and knowing why."
–Henry Van Dyke

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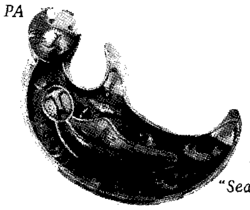

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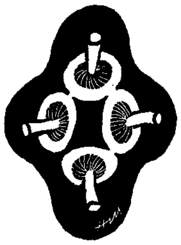
of time on a mountain, or anywhere else distant from a tube, you might miss something. The even tone of the Emergency Broadcast System, which all children of the TV age intuitively know will be the last sound they hear before they die—you might miss that. But on a mountain, or any place well away from the noise of the world, there is room for reflection on what you *do* know. Who better understood the war in the Persian Gulf—the person who watched every nerve-jangling second of CNN's wall-to-wall coverage or some mythical person who heard only the most important points of the debate and had time to ponder? Researchers surveyed Denver residents in an attempt to answer part of this question, and their findings, reported by Alexander Cockburn in the Los Angeles *Times*, are suggestive. Knowledge of the facts of the conflict varied inversely with the amount of time spent watching the coverage; for example, only sixteen per cent of light viewers mistakenly believed that Kuwait was a democracy, a proportion that more than doubled among heavy viewers. We say "information" reverently, as if it meant "understanding" or "wisdom," but it doesn't. Sometimes it even gets in the way.



TWILIGHT: Time for a swim. I ease myself down from the rocks into the chilly water, feeling the mud between my toes. I stand for a minute, aware of the line on my calves between the cold water and the warmth of the sun, and then dive in. I can feel the water rushing past my head, smoothing back my hair. As I stroke out to the middle of the water, I'm conscious of the pull of my shoulder blades. I haul myself out onto a rock in the middle of the pond, and sit there dripping. A breeze comes up, and lifts the hairs on my back, each one giving a nearly imperceptible tug at my skin. Under hand and thigh I can feel the roughness and the hardness of the rock. If I listen, I can hear the birds singing from several trees around the shore, and a frog now and again, and from the outlet stream a few hundred yards away a faint burbling—always changing and always the same. If I listen without concentrating, it's mainly the wind that I hear, a steady slight pressure on the leaves. I can see a hundred things—the sun reflects off the ripples from my passage and casts a moving line of shadow and sparkle on the rocks that rise up at the water's edge. I can smell the water. I can taste the water, too—not the neutral beverage you drink because there's nothing in the fridge, but wet, rich, *complete*. As it drops into the corner of my mouth, there's the slightest tang of salt from the trail sweat of the afternoon. I can feel my weight—feel it disappear as I slip into the water, feel it cling to me again as I drag myself back onto the rock.

Television requires us to restrict the use of our senses—that's one of the ways it robs us of information. It asks us to use our eyes and ears, and only our eyes and ears. If it is doing its job "correctly," you lose consciousness of your body—at least, until a sort of achy torpor begins to assert itself, and, maybe, after some hours, a dull headache, and, of course, the insatiable hunger that you never really notice but that somehow demands a constant flow of chips and soda. If you were to cut off your nose to spite your face, or for any other reason, it wouldn't impair your ability to watch television. And TV even limits the senses that it caters to. It rarely provides a vista; its instinct is for the closeup. In the three or four years between the time I stopped watching TV and the time I began this project, the camera had tightened in dramatically on people's faces, especially during commercials: a man would be selling you financial services, and you could count the worry lines around his eyes. But the tight shot imposes one center of attention. If you're filming "Nova," you can get a nifty shot of ants mating, but you can't, say, lie on your stomach and observe a square foot of ground. Here's a big, spidery thing waving back and forth on improbable legs, and a line of ants, and the wind dropping needles from the bottom bough of a small pine. TV can't deal with faint noise, either; even "background" music is in the foreground, and only one sound at a time is permitted. When people shout, the decibel level doesn't really rise much. You knew the man in the Crazy Eddie ad was yelling by his hand gestures, not his volume, and that was certainly a blessing, but it all contributes to the sense of living in a muffled, shrunken world.

TV chops away perspective, too. Out on the mountain, even if your eye is drawn to something in particular, your peripheral vision fills in all sorts of detail, constantly. When you watch TV, your peripheral vision ceases to function: you stare at the screen like a pitcher staring in at the catcher's mitt. You no longer even notice the *set*—the frame, the knobs, the antenna (if you're still backward enough to need an antenna). Your vision is cut down to maybe ten degrees of the horizon—on a large screen, maybe fifteen degrees. What you see, you see sharply; the images have been edited so that peripheral vision is unnecessary. In the Cosby living room, there is a staircase, and in front of it is a sofa, and the family are sitting on the sofa. No one is off in the corner making faces. The scene is fantastically stripped down and uncomplicated, and, as a consequence, whoever is in the foreground assumes vaster importance than he or she would be granted under an open sky.

Any art, of course, does this to one degree or another: the artist wants you to focus on something he or she has picked out from the world. But the experience of watching, say, a play in the theatre differs wildly from the experience of watching a television drama. The curtain comes up and down, lights go on and off, the volume rises and falls, and if you are sitting front-row left you may see quite different action from what you would see fifteen seats to the right or thirty behind. Most important of all, you can *choose* what to see. There is more there than the eye can take in, far more. You may spend the whole scene looking at what the TV director would call a reaction shot, or you may let yourself get caught up in the background. Sometimes the actors come right out among you—they may touch you. In any case, your absorption is of an entirely different character. Movies move in the direction of television, but even they have much more periphery. It's hard to imagine a television epic, a spectacle, even on HDTV with Dolby stereo. No one has ever shot a scene for television with a cast of thousands.

Or consider the difference between watching a baseball game on TV and watching one at the park. Technology enriches the TV version with closeup and slo mo and instant replay, but at a great price. It deprives you of the enormous perspective available to anyone in the stadium, the incredible choice of what to look at. TV looks at pretty women on occasion (brazenly, though) but never at the fight in the stands or the man selling beer or the outfielder hitching his pants. TV filters out most of the familiar sounds of the ballpark, too: the sourceless, undifferentiated babble that comes from forty thousand people talking, laughing, rustling sacks of popcorn—a sound that the crack of the bat breaks so clearly through, refocussing everyone's attention.

During the war in the Persian Gulf, people said we were seeing things as they happened, live, with gut-wrenching immediacy. In truth, we were seeing what television was able to show us. The lights of tracer fire flashing over Baghdad were in a way impressive, but if I'd been told they were a laser show commemorating the hundredth anniversary of the Iraqi electric utility I'd have nodded in agreement. The shudder, the concussion, the dust, the smell—all the things that even a moderately competent writer would express, TV can't. Most of all, the confusion: the camera and the small screen can't cope with confusion, because they search relentlessly for a center, a focus. "What do we see when we sit at home and watch a war? Do we experience an actual event?" Mark Crispin Miller asks in his 1988 book "Boxed In." "In fact, that 'experience' is fundamentally absurd. Most obviously, there is an incongruity of scale, the radical disjunction of locations. While a war is among the biggest things that can ever happen to a nation or people, devastating families, blasting away the roofs and walls, we see it compressed and miniaturized on a sturdy little piece of furniture, which stands and shines at the very center of our household." If you wanted even the slightest sense of what the war with Iraq was like, how it *felt*, you'd be far better off hiring someone to turn up at some random hour in the night and toss a brick through your window.

9 P.M.: On "Twin Peaks," Agent Cooper goes to the vet to track down the bird that attacked Laura Palmer, and finds a llama in the waiting room. The Indian deputy reveals that his girlfriend got her Ph.D. from Brandeis. Two girls stand in the high-school bathroom talking about Laura; one says the idea that she worked in a brothel makes her feel "all shivery, but it's like a hot-cold, like when you hold an ice cube on your bare skin for a long time." Another young woman, this one with her blouse open, rubs herself with a loaded handgun. The search for the one-armed man ends with his capture. Now that the show has gone off the air, it's hard to remember that for a moment in the spring of 1990 "Twin Peaks" was seen as vitally important, as culture come to the small screen, as "quality," as the future. It was on the cover of *Time;* everyone talked endlessly about David Lynch's marvellous sensibility. "In this country, TV is used primarily as a narcotic to prepare people for the commercial," Mark Frost, the show's co-creator, said. "As we've just seen in Eastern Europe, it can also be an instrument for social change. We created a show that we'd like people to watch. It undercuts people's expectations and asks them to pay attention. Anything that makes people more alert is positive."

Whether or not "Twin Peaks" was a "good show" is beside the point. "Twin Peaks" was just one in a line of breakthroughs. Quite regularly, every two or three seasons, a program emerges that is going to change TV, to point the way forward. It's as if everyone agreed that TV was pretty shabby, but hoped and trusted that it's about to get great, to start enlightening us. To become "an instrument for social change." To educate our young. To open up new worlds, new attitudes. The particular program either goes off the air because no one watches it or settles into a rut. (By the fall of 1990, the TV critic for *Rolling Stone* was referring to "Twin Peaks" as "a freak-show version of 'Dynasty.' ") It may leave stylistic tracks, it may break new ground with its frankness (that is, the amount of innuendo or skin), it may spawn spinoffs and imitations—but it's over.

Soon, though, like an ex-boyfriend in a fifties sitcom, television is back at the door with roses and candy. "Look, I know I was a jerk. But this time it'll be different. I've changed. From now on, I'm going to be clever, creative. I'm going to be like Jackie Gleason." And so we let TV back into our hearts. Pretty soon, its skin is splitting and turning green—TV has forgotten all

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its promises and has reverted into "The Incredible Hulk."

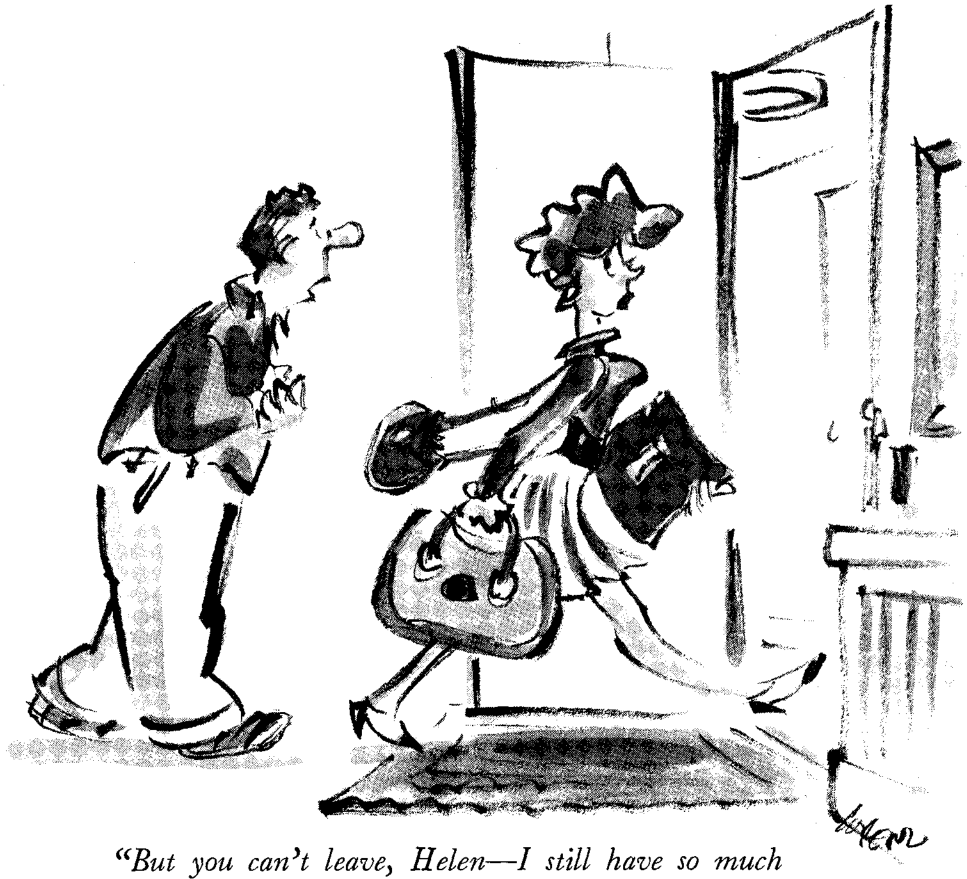
The fondest hope of all, repeatedly dashed but never destroyed, is that TV can be harnessed to educate children. By the time I reached grade school, the library had been converted into an "Instructional Materials Center," crowded with TVs and viewers. Eventually, a lot of people assumed, most instruction would come from a set. This vision has not faded altogether. *Newsweek* recently reported on a current-events teacher at a good South Carolina high school who tapes the news for his classes. "In one recent class," the teacher "periodically stopped the vcr so that students could discuss the coverage," the magazine said. " 'What's Imelda Marcos famous for?' he asked during a segment on her upcoming trial. 'Shoes,' the class yelled back. 'Who does that remind you of?' the teacher prompted. 'Tammy Faye Bakker,' the students shot back." And on the Fairfax system several channels belong to schools and colleges; one teacher was gamely offering Latin II over the air. It seemed exactly like most other Latin classes, except that kids kept phoning in with wonderful excuses. ("We wanted to call and ask you about your quiz today, because the cable was down on Wednesday, and we didn't get good reception yesterday at all.") It seemed like a relic, actually—like a picture-phone, something from the past, not the future. The bloom has faded; the outcry over Channel One, a competent twelve-minute news show aimed at schoolkids and interrupted with candy commercials, makes the old vision of an electronic classroom seem remote.

This failure comes as a great disappointment to many. McLuhan, after all, wrote, "Since TV, *nobody* is happy with mere book knowledge of French or English poetry. The unanimous cry now is 'Let's talk French,' or 'Let the bard be heard.' " With no one really able to prove that even "Sesame Street" results in notable increases in ability, more and more TV reformers have settled for simply trying to get violence and gore out of children's programs. That is difficult, because every cartoon made since 1945 is still broadcast constantly. But many of the newly produced shows have eliminated the inventive, anarchic destruction of the old predator-prey shows. No more accordion-pleated, burned-to-a-cinder, falling-a-thousand-feet-to-the-canyon-floor coyotes. Now there are animated raccoons that say things like "It never hurts to be self-assertive," or space aliens named Derf who announce, "I'm scared to be around earthlings. Every day, you fight and kill one another." One wonders if the children notice that the gory cartoons of yore are carefully, patiently animated, while the modern versions, though their tone may be uplifting, are crude and cheap.

Still, can't we hope for exceptional programs—programs that from time to time will change the way we see the world, programs that will open our hearts and minds as much as the best books, and do it in a grand, mass, simultaneous way? We can hope, and sometimes we will be rewarded. "Twin Peaks" you can argue about, but Ken Burns' "The Civil War" was a success by any standard. (It's curious, though, that what many called the best TV show ever was one that relied heavily on still photographs and readings from letters, since these hardly take advantage of TV's supposed technical gifts. In some ways, it was more like a wonderfully illustrated book being read aloud by talented people.) And so are some of the nature shows, and "60 Minutes," and "Frontline," and so on. No doubt about it—there is good stuff on TV.

But even here there's a catch. Even magnificent programs, or the smaller good things that happen each day, are doomed, I think, not to make much difference. This is because of the characteristic that really sets TV apart—not its ability to transmit sight and sound but its ubiquity. There it stands, twenty-four hours a day, ready to pour out information and amusement. Which means that if something exceptional happens it hardly matters—it is quickly averaged out, eroded by this ceaseless flood. On "Good Morning America," Teddy Kollek, the mayor of Jerusalem, is being interviewed, and is saying a few interesting things about a recent visit from Václav Havel. But as soon as he's finished, or maybe slightly before, the host is saying, "Mr. Mayor—always outspoken, always feisty, good to see you. Fifteen minutes past the hour. How to prepare for a record invasion of gypsy moths that may be coming when 'Good Morning America' continues." If the only TV you heard all day was this six-minute talk with Teddy Kollek, it might linger in your mind—you could mull it over. But it's quickly replaced by a man who's talking about egg masses and how a female gypsy moth resembles a 747, and then it's Western Omelette McMuffin and Tom Berenger and a chat with Brent Musburger and a movie review and a chat among the various hosts about their upcoming trip to the British Isles. This takes less than an hour.

A few years ago, the people of an isolated Colombian Indian tribe, the Kogi, decided they needed to send a message to the rest of the world. The snowpack that watered their mountain range was disappearing; their seers insisted that human activity was destroying the environment around the entire planet. So they made the unprecedented decision to allow a BBC producer into their villages to film a documentary. "It was not at all clear to them what 'the BBC' was," the producer said later. "Some clearly formed the view that it was a kin group of some sort." But though they had no idea that the world was round, they grasped the magical power of television. Their message—that they "have seen the changes start that mark the end of life; the world is beginning to die"—could instantly and simultaneously be transmitted to most of the people of the world. So the film crew came, with helicopters and lights and cameras; the documentary was made, and it was shown in Britain and America and around the world; and quite a few people watched, and many of them must have found it sobering, for here was a long-lived culture speaking out of nowhere at the same time and with the same message as our leading scientists. It was uncanny. But then it was over, and something else came on, and the warning passed unheeded.



"But you can't leave, Helen—I still have so much to learn from women."

• •

4 A.M.: It's time for "Financial Freedom and Wealth Building in America Today," a program that comes to you from the beautiful Outrigger Waikiki Beach Hotel, in Honolulu. John Davidson is the host. In recent years, he was the host of "The Hollywood Squares." I first remember him from an ancient sitcom in which Sally Field played his wife and could read his mind. Anyway, he seems impervious to age, and he's here to introduce you to Dave Del Dotto, a "self-made millionaire" who has "been featured in countless magazines and newspapers" as well as on "national television news and information shows," and is a "frequent visitor to various government congressional offices," "our nation's No. 1 success merchant," and a man who would like you to send him three hundred and sixty-seven dollars in exchange for some books he's written on how you can buy foreclosed real estate using creative financing, among other topics. Del Dotto gives a good spiel—especially a story about a guy who sold so much foreclosed real estate that he was able to bring his mother over from Bulgaria for a visit—but I was more fascinated by the unlikely "celebrities" who kept appearing to endorse his approach; here was Miss Hawaii, for instance, who urged "all you youngsters and college people" to buy the books.

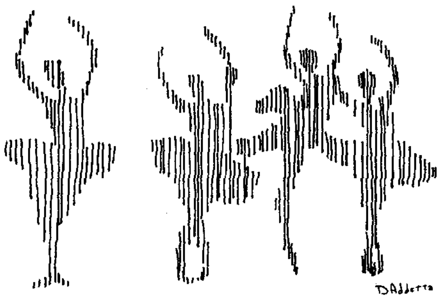
The idea of standing under the stars and feeling how small you are—which is more or less what I was doing late at night on the mountain—is not a television idea. Everything on television tells you the opposite—that you're the most important person, and that people are all that matter. "We do it all for you"; "Have it your way"; "This Bud's for you"; the endless parade of jesters to entertain *you*; the obsequious newscasts that bring the story *you* want to see right into *your* living room. It's what *you* want. The chairman of MTV Networks told *Rolling Stone*, "The consumer is our God."

This ceaseless toadying and curtsying and currying of our favor—for we, after all, can provide the dollars and the ratings—inevitably distort our view of the world. What counts? People count. If Brandon Tartikoff, the former NBC programming genius and now the chairman of Paramount Pictures, were to rewrite the Book of Genesis, people would be created on Day One and Noah's Ark would be filled with zany folks—not much room for animals, especially the boring ones. The stars in the night sky hold no interest for advertisers, because they don't reflect us. The stars that do reflect us are the kind that appear on talk shows. Since we can't all appear on TV, our species needs some representatives, and these are the people filling the couch next to Regis and Kathie Lee. If they were of interest because they were actors, Johnny would ask them questions about acting. ("How did you conjure up the mood for that scene?") Instead, we want to know about their lives, and the lives of stars they have "worked with." They are of interest because they are other people, and that they are usually normal to the point of boredom only adds to their appeal, because they are stand-ins for us. By the very act of being important, they redeem the lifetime we spend watching them. Most cultures, historically, have put something else—God or nature, or some combination—at the center. We've put such things at the periphery. A consumer society doesn't need them to function, and it can't tolerate the limits they might impose; the only need is for people.

Television's unique contribution to this process is the creation of celebrities who are celebrated almost entirely for being celebrities—they're "legends" because TV has so much time to fill. Turn on "Rodeo Drive," the gossip game show where "the glitter meets the dirt," which begins with "seven concealed words" connected with John Goodman, Mr. T, and Raisa Gorbachev, and continues with "Janet Jackson or Jesse Jackson—who's had a marriage annulled?" and "Fact or rumor—Whoopi Goldberg is an honorary member of the Harlem Globetrotters?" Hit the remote, and here's Robert Morley in a studio kitchen cooking with the celebrity guest Jo Anne Worley, late of "Laugh-In." Did someone say "Laugh-In"? Here's Arte Johnson, the man who used to say "Very interesting, but stupid"—a line my little brother repeated about four hundred times a day for several months. Arte's the host of a celebrity putting contest to benefit the Hugh O'Brien Youth Foundation. Jack Carter is putting. "This is the most fun you can have with your clothes on," he says, in his waggish way. Here's Zsa Zsa Gabor's *daughter* on "Inside Report." She's making her living as a standup comic, and her ghostwriter is Mickey Rooney, Jr. She's telling stories about Christmas with her pop, Conrad Hilton.

It's incredibly sad to watch these fading celebrities sometimes. We're stuck with having to figure out what it means that Gilligan—Bob Denver, who can be seen in almost every home in America every day—is twenty-five years older than his castaway self, and here he is explaining to Sig, on "Sig's Celebrity Kitchen," how he works at boat shows. They build him an island, and he sits on the island and signs autographs. "I've got them from thirty-five all the way down that grew up with me," he says. (This man was also Maynard G. Krebs, of course.) He's cooking "noodle-bean-and-beef casserole" and talking about his friend the Skipper, Alan Hale, Jr., who died recently: "I did a lot of personal appearances with him the last twenty years. We got rescued wherever there was a big body of water—if there was a lake, a stream, they'd put us out there on some kind of raft, and we'd come in and we'd be rescued." It's nearly impossible to be better known than Gilligan. What tiny percentage of Americans, shown a picture of him in his bos'n's cap, couldn't identify him? And yet he seems pathetic now. Passed by, the way we will all be passed by in time.

Human beings—any one of us, and our species as a whole—are not all-important, are not at the center of the world. That is the one essential piece of information, the one great secret, offered by any encounter with the woods or the mountains or the ocean, or any wilderness or chunk of nature or patch of night sky. I can sit on the knob above the pond on Crow Mountain and see the hills stretch off into the blue-gray distance; I can hide myself and stay quiet on the edge of a glade and watch the deer and the chipmunks and the bugs and the flowers and the rotting of an old tree; I can lie on my back and watch the vultures circle. And I would be a fool to think that any of this had anything to do with me—to think that it wasn't here before me, or that it didn't exist for its own reasons, independent of my need for beauty or "solitude." It's true that if I wanted to I could destroy it—set fire to it, or develop it for a ski resort. And we as a species have the power, by forever putting ourselves first, to end it forever with our weapons, or damage it terribly by damaging the climate and the ozone and the other fundamental systems on which it depends. We have the *power* to make the world fit our "anthropocentric" vision. But that doesn't mean that this vision of the world is correct. Some environmentalists have begun to talk about "deep ecology" in recent years—about the idea that we must see the earth as a whole, and that if we insist on dominating everything we'll create for ourselves an unlivable world, and so on. But this vital information comes best from the encounter with the real world—the *real* real world, the one that was here before us.



The TV culture is especially damaging because it does not content itself with focussing on human beings to the exclusion of the rest of nature. It also relentlessly breaks down the sense of community *between* human beings. Day after day, on sitcom after talk show after cartoon after drama, TV actively participates in the savaging of an old order it once helped set in stone. TV history, as I've said, goes back forty-five years. At its dawn are the shows like "Ozzie and Harriet," synonyms for the way things were. Every day, we can watch Ozzie and Harriet and Beaver and the nineteen-fifties. They represent a certain sort of community. It is no longer a physical community, really; it's faceless suburbia. But there is still some sense of shared values, albeit white and patriarchal and square and repressive ones—values largely worthy of being overthrown. And TV joined gleefully in this overthrow. Every day, over and over, we relive the vanquishing of that order in the name of self-expression and human liberation and fun. The greatest story of the TV age is the transition from the fifties to the sixties—the demolition of the last ordered "American way of life." And TV tells us this story incessantly. It begins by repeating the old shows, and therefore the old verities.

On "Father Knows Best," Bud is trying out for the football team. To win the notice of the coach, he decides to date the coach's daughter, a sweet and innocent girl. He makes the team, but, of course, he doesn't feel right, so he talks to his dad. "You got what you wanted, but you feel you didn't get it fairly," Dad says gravely. "Now your conscience is bothering you, and you'll figure some way to straighten it out."

And he does: he quits the team and genuinely falls in love with the girl. That plot seems exceptionally familiar and yet so distant: the football team as the pinnacle of boyish desire; the formal courtship of the girl, complete with long talks with her father; and, especially, the act of going to one's own father to talk about such matters. It is resolutely unhip—almost as unhip as the "Leave It to Beaver" episode that begins with Eddie Haskell's attempts to cheat on a history exam (a history exam with questions on Clemenceau and Lloyd George) and ends as Eddie, reformed, dutifully recites the first six countries to ratify the League of Nations charter.

But TV doesn't offer us these shows simply as relics. Consciously and unconsciously, it pokes fun at them. Consider this promo for Nick at Nite's non-stop week of "Donna Reed Show" reruns: "This is Donna Reed, supercompetent mother of two and wife of one," says the announcer, who is imitating Robin Leach. "She lives in this spectacular American dream house, which she cleans for her husband, the handsome Dr. Stone. Dinnertime at Chez Stone features meat, usually accompanied by potatoes, and takes place in this spotless dream kitchen." Over pictures of people in gas masks and belching factories, the announcer says, mockingly, "Out to save a world that's made a mess of things, she comes—mighty Hoover vacuum in hand. It's Donna Reed, sent from TV land to lead us politely into the new millennium."

Even when the ridicule is less explicit, it's fascinating to see the old order break down in front of your eyes each night. Over ninety minutes on a single channel, I watched a progression that began with "That Girl," in which Marlo Thomas is living alone in the city and faring well but still desperate for her parents to like her cooking. "Rhoda" was next: she goes to pick up the kids at the house of her husband's ex-wife, and they get roaring drunk. And, finally, on "Phyllis," most of the humor came from a cackling granny who loves to watch golf on TV because the golfers keep bending over and displaying their rear ends. On "Ozzie and Harriet," Ricky talks to his girlfriend on the phone in the living room in front of his parents and thinks nothing of it. By "The Brady Bunch," the girls are giggling as they talk secretly over the Princess phone. When you get to "One Day at a Time," the children listen in as the mother talks to *her* boyfriend, who's trying to persuade her to come to a South Pacific island. "He's probably down there starving for your body, lusting for your lips," the daughter says. And "One Day at a Time" is already in reruns.

5 A.M.: For the two- or three-hundredth time today, a worried, expensively casual man with incipient hair loss is trying to place a phone call. He is phoning Phoenix, but somehow manages to dial Fiji instead, where his call is answered by a partying native on a beach. This mixup is odd: it seems to imply that if you misdial you are likely to reach a location phonetically similar to your intended destination—Perugia rather than Peoria. In reality, the area code for Phoenix is 602, while to reach Fiji you must call 011-679. But never mind—that's not the man's problem. His problem is that he has switched phone companies and his new carrier won't give him "immediate credit for wrong numbers." It's unclear why he can't wait a few days for his mistake to be righted—from all appearances, he has more money than he knows what to do with—but he goes into a petulant sulk, whining to the operator that this never happened with A.T. & T. (Apparently, he has spent much of his life misdialling.) The operator says, understandably, "You're not dealing with A.T. & T." "I am now," he says, slamming down the receiver, and his disgusted look gives way to a smile of rueful triumph.

A.T. & T. ads, as Michael Arlen documented in his book "Thirty Seconds," are more carefully produced than most feature films. When you're selling something as intangible as the phone connection to someone's house, you need to rally primal emotion. For years, A.T. & T. relied on sentiment—"Reach out and touch someone." But, in the aftermath of the court-ordered breakup of its monopoly, A.T. & T. has had to raise even stronger feelings, like fear of humiliation. Its main campaign, to persuade customers not to heed the blandishments of MCI or Sprint and switch their service, has featured a parade of harassed yuppies who have made the mistake of going over to the other side.

The A.T. & T. ads exemplify, I think, the conservatism of an advanced

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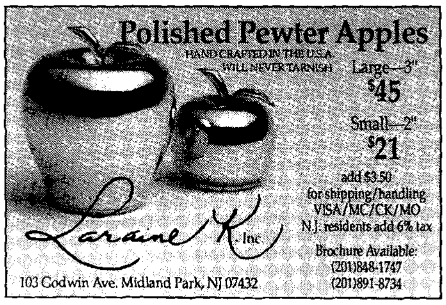

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consumer society. One of the functions of advertising—and, more broadly, of television as a whole—is to reinforce the way we're used to doing things, and one of its most potent tools is ridicule. These saps have changed their long-distance company and been humiliated. What if they had decided to change, say, their expensive taste in cars and clothes? What if they decided to chuck their jobs, alter their life styles? The consumer society can adapt to change—indeed, in the name of growth it must sometimes encourage it—but the form of adaptation is usually akin to what a marketer would call "brand management." That is, confronted with the rise of people interested in good nutrition, no advertiser worth his reduced-sodium content would encourage people simply to eat less packaged food or dine lower on the food chain. Instead, the advertiser "extends" his brand by creating slightly different products that can perhaps be marketed at higher margins—breakfast cereals, say, studded with slivers of almond because people believe that "nutty goodness" will help lower their cholesterol. Or he repositions his brand slightly. If you had recently begun watching McDonald's ads, for instance, you would likely think it was an enormous recycling company that happened to sell hamburgers on the side.

Allied with the fear of humiliation projected on television is television's carefully cultivated sense of hip, its ironic view. In "Boxed In" Mark Crispin Miller pointed out that a great deal of the time when we are watching TV we know that it is stupid—that, in fact, we watch it because we know that it is stupid and enjoy the feeling of superiority, of hipness, it gives us. That is, TV more or less takes us into its confidence: it says, "You know it's silly to be watching 'Donna Reed' reruns after thirty-five years, and we know it's silly. That's why we're packaging them in this funny way, with lots of jokes about how silly she is, living in her 'dream house,' and so on." What it doesn't say is that once you're swelled with this agreeable sense of your hip superiority you can be sold products as easily as a tribesman just emerging from the bush. Miller went on to dissect any number of shows and commercials (his "Family Feud" autopsy is a gem), but even he, I think, would have had a hard time predicting just how blatant TV would become, in the last two or three years, about playing to our sense of hipness.

Take MTV as an example. The people who run the network face a potentially serious problem: their target audience is at the age when it might be attracted to "subversive" ideas. And rock and roll, defanged as it now is, still—by sheer volume, if nothing else—raises the possibility of mild rebellion against the model consumer life style. MTV's response has included a series of ads like this one:

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use words just like these to
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SIMPLE AND EFFECTIVE
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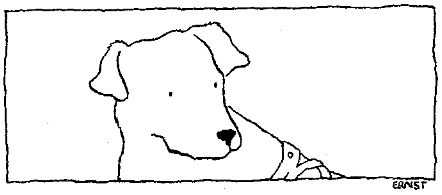
MTV

This ad, obviously, is not designed to make you stand up and turn off the TV and do something else. (MTV, above all others, requires torpor from its viewers.) It is designed to make you say, "Yeah, I'm hip. I'm just sitting here, but I'm under no illusion that I'm not. I'm not pretending to be *doing* something deep. I'm a couch potato." Others have been following this lead. The short-lived HA! comedy network, appealing to an MTV-ish demographic, was constantly broadcasting promos for itself with slogans like "I've Got Better Things to Do," a wink that makes it O.K. to sit and watch, say, twenty-four solid hours of Marlo Thomas reruns ("Gobs and Gobs of 'That Girl' "). Still, MTV has retained the title for strangest commercial—a sixty-second spot that I saw during "Club MTV." Jonathan Demme, the certifiably hip filmmaker, was shown in extreme closeup, just talking: "With MTV, obviously, the primary purpose of MTV is to entertain, and that's fine, but I think it would be terrific to see MTV try to become more of a force for—in a small way, without intruding on their ability or their need to entertain—become some kind of force for social change and have kind of—use MTV as a little bit of a consciousness-raising medium as well as an entertainment medium." Now, MTV doesn't want to raise our consciousness. If it did, it wouldn't show so much Lycra. If it did, it would just go out and try, and not show Jonathan Demme talking about how it would be nice if it did. But MTV knows that at this particular moment there are lots of kids thinking about social change, or thinking that they should be thinking about social change—about the environment, say. So it allows—encourages—them to pretend they are so hip that it's happening almost by osmosis, simply by looking at Jonathan Demme.



TV retains its power in part because it has trained us not to take it seriously. This emperor is so confident he announces constantly that he has no clothes; he makes jokes about it. "See—no pants, ha-ha-ha-ha. Back after this short commercial break." Watch "David Letterman" for a night to see what I mean. You can hardly deconstruct it, because it's deconstructing itself. There's nothing on TV to push *against;* even if you're inclined to push, after a while you stop, and are carried along for the ride. On a medium that mocks itself, seriousness does not play. TV has prepared us to defuse most bombs. When the twelve-year-olds on the new "Mickey Mouse Club" perform a long sketch spoofing the Home Shopping Network ("If you were to buy the planet Saturn in any store, you might expect to pay twenty-five squajillion"), they are not attacking the Home Shopping Network. They are unconsciously insuring that kids will watch the network, immune to its crudeness, because the kids already know about it—they're in on the joke. If you say Home Shopping Network's a tacky rip-off, you're a dweeb, because everyone already knows it's a tacky rip-off.

Television, Miller writes, "has us automatically deplore or ridicule all anger, fear, political commitment, deep belief, keen pleasure, exalted self-esteem, tremendous love; and yet while making all these passions seem unnatural, the medium persistently dwells on their darkest consequences, teasing the housebound spectator with hints of that intensity it has helped to kill." TV is sometimes accused of encouraging fantasies. Its real problem, though, is that it encourages—enforces, almost—a brute realism. It is anti-utopian in the extreme. We're discouraged from thinking that, except for a few new products, there might be a better way of doing things. TV employs a consistent mocking reductio ad absurdum toward anything the slightest bit off center. Ever occur to you to give up TV for a while? A sitcom called "Mr. Belvedere" explores this subject. He's a butler, and in today's episode his family have sworn off the tube. As a result, they become absurd. They play Simon Says. They dress up in hillbilly outfits and start a jug band. Without TV, you'd be playing a kazoo! Think maybe you might give your family more time and attention instead of buying them stuff? Then watch the single cruellest ad on television. One after another, nice-looking old ladies appear on the screen to say what they want for Mother's Day. "You just give me your love and respect," one says. But underneath her chin, Joe Isuzu-fashion, appear the words "I'd like that nice desk organizer."

That mocking, knowing snicker is so sad because it shuts people's ears to the promise of this particular moment. Which is, simply, that, having immense amounts of technology available to us, this society could pick and choose the things that would create a life both sustainable and rich. We could use cars only when we had to, and walk or ride bikes more, like the rest of the world. But if someone came on MTV and said, "Folks, forget the new car. Put those expensive sneakers to use and do some walking," the automakers would have little to fear. Trained to laugh, trained as ironists, trained to avoid anything that might make us foolish, we're all but inoculated against such messages. "Sounds like the Waltons—'Good night, John-Boy.' 'Good night, Grandma.' " When you mention that in some ways people lived better a hundred years ago, the nearly automatic response is that they died at fifty. True enough—and I've never heard anyone seriously suggest giving up antibiotics and anesthesia and clean water. But perhaps we could, if we listened more carefully to the information of the natural world, come to terms with dying, and spare ourselves the last, anguished months hooked to machines. Almost no one suggests *abolishing* electricity, but is a nation where nightfall involves a light bulb or two and the elegance of candles so patently ludicrous?

We have now, as a species, lived through extremes. We know that people will flee from backbreaking labor at the first chance. But we might be starting to sense that the total abandonment of skilled and careful labor, the utter emancipation offered by light bulbs and machines, can be just as alienating, quite aside from its environmental dangers. And perhaps we're starting to sense something deeply human in a life less engaged with the world of consumption and growth and comfort offered by television, and more engaged with the world of balance and pleasure and simplicity suggested by the natural world.

We have been given the gift of light. Can we use it to light our way on a dark night when we need to go somewhere, or must we keep using it as a floodlight, to wash out the darkness always and everywhere? Unlike all the other animals, who have these decisions made for them, we have to choose. And what we choose depends on the information we receive.

6 A.M.: "You have smelly shoes over your eyes. Do you know who else is wearing eyeglasses? A dog is! And the dog is driving a car!" That's Harry Lorayne, who's selling his memory technique on WOR; he has remembered the names of all hundred people in the audience. On "The Flintstones," Betty and Wilma are earning extra money by renting rooms to a pair of goateed jazz musicians who keep saying things like "Way out groovarooni." James Robison, who is a preacher, will send you an orphan-made basket from Africa in exchange for a contribution. "They normally work for twelve hours a day, but they're working sixteen hours a day, day and night." The Franklin Language Master, offered on QVC, knows four hundred and eighty-seven thousand synonyms. ("If it was to just continuously speak all its words, it would take twenty-one hours.") Kitchenmate allows you to make strawberry Daiquiris and also "mayonnaise in a jar with a room-temperature egg in twenty seconds." In the movie "Starman," an alien is revivifying a deer that has been strapped to a hunter's car hood. Dr. J. is addressing the Converse kids-basketball clinic, offering advice on how to deal

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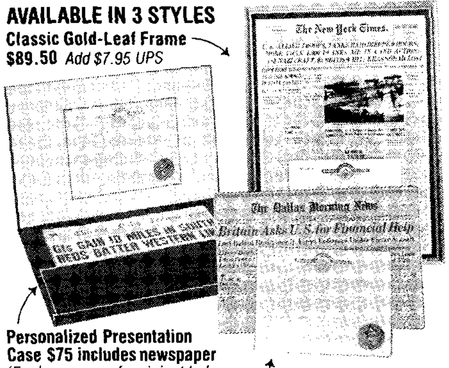

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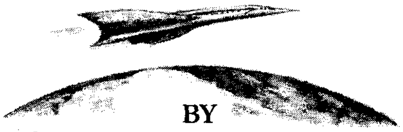

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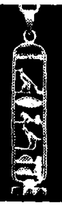

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with the media after the game and what to do when celebrities want to visit the locker room. Davey and Goliath and a poor boy they're being nice to are *trying to collect enough bottles so they'll* be able to afford the Saturday matinée of "Boy in Space." Oprah Winfrey did have a baby when she was fourteen, but it was premature and quickly died. An "end-time prophet" on one of the religious stations is building a Denver headquarters. ("Denver is perfectly located between Frankfurt, Germany, and Tokyo, Japan, so I understand why God is giving us this building.") A new program, "You and Me, Kids," shows parents how to have fun with their kids. ("Let's pretend you're a spider and now let's pretend that your mom is the stuff you make webs from.") Robert Reed—Mike Brady—has grown a mustache and also found a "breakthrough technology" to "reprogram you for success." He points out that only twelve per cent of your mind is conscious, and Art Fleming agrees: after listening to some tapes they know about, a boy "has started to wear colorful clothes, which he never would wear before." The financial markets "are waiting for the new unemployment figures," according to ABC. "It all has to do with how those new unemployment numbers show up. Too many new jobs could tip the Fed into raising interest rates." General Motors' car sales rose a cheerful 4.1 per cent in the last ten days of April, but business travel to St. Louis will be delayed an hour and five minutes because of fog. The traffic copter notes that "someone on the shoulder of Muddy Branch Road is changing his tire." On Country Music Television, a singer laments that "pretty girls are a dime a dozen, and I only got a nickel to my name." Some old people are sitting on a sofa, being interviewed for a plumbing ad. ("When I was a girl, water didn't come to us, we went to water. We had a well, and we pumped her." "Colors? I don't remember any." "Styles? We had styles of dresses, not faucets.") On "Now You're Cooking," a woman is making pigs-in-a-blanket with a SuperSnacker. ("We have a pact in our house—the first one up plugs in the SuperSnacker.")

And, on the pond, the duck is jus swimming back and forth, his breas pushing out a wedge of ripples tha catch the soft early sun.

—Bill McKibbe

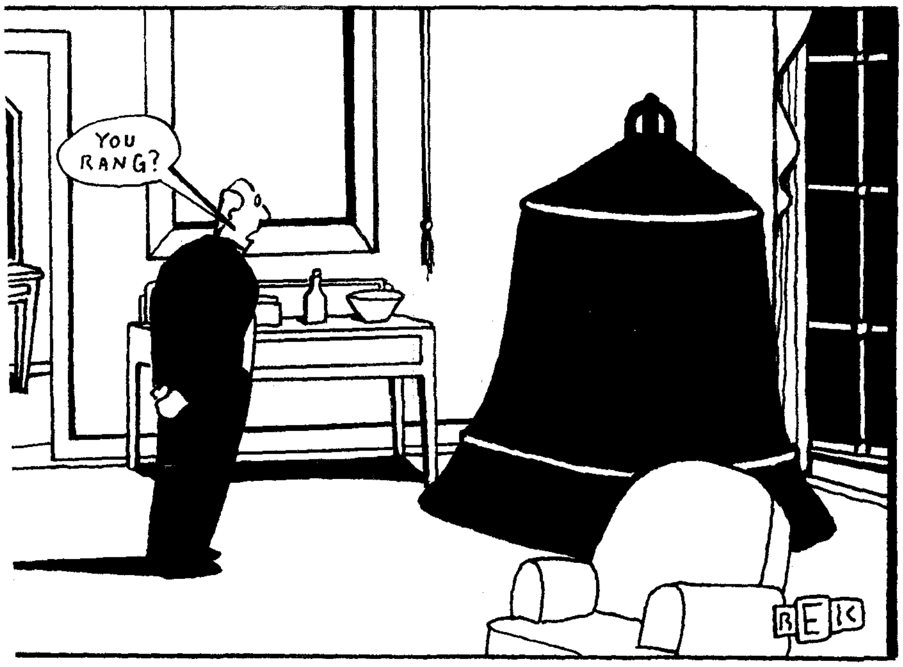
THE THEATRE

Forgettable

IN an abrupt, percussive style that fights coherence every step of the way, Howard Korder's "Search and Destroy," at Circle in the Square, tells the story of Martin Mirkheim, who, deeply in debt to the government, reads an inspirational self-help book on how to become virtuous and brave and decides that he will produce a movie based upon it. He must, of course, obtain the rights from the unapproachable doctor who wrote it—no easy task—and then raise the requisite cash. This financial pilgrimage is a matter of small scenes, a few as brief as blackouts, in which Mirkheim and his associate, with backbreaking irony, sink ever deeper into corruption—drug dealing, and even the murder of a state trooper who stops their car for speeding—before they end up in Hollywood, goal attained. The pervasive slapstick cynicism that underlies this story has little to do with genuine satire, if that is what Mr. Korder had in mind, though at its best (near the beginning) it occasionally has something to do with comedy. Not enough, however, to justify the strain of keeping track of the characters and episodes as they spin by amid jagged strips of light in the pit of this awful theatre. "Search and Destroy" makes an exhausting evening, in spite of good performances by an able company, under David Chambers' direction. Griffin Dunne is the intense, determined Mirkheim; Stephen McHattie is the elusive, contemptible doctor; Keith Szarabajka is Mirkheim's elegant associate; and Paul Guilfoyle, Jane Fleiss, and Welker White are splendid in other roles. The spare scenery is by Chris Barreca, and Chris Parry is responsible for that unsettling lighting.

"THE SUBSTANCE OF FIRE," the fine play by Jon Robin Baitz which opened last March at Playwrights Horizons, has now moved to the Mitzi E. Newhouse, and it's just as affecting as it was originally. I went to see it again, partly out of affection and partly out of curiosity: would the play be able to maintain its intimacy in this larger house and in the vastness of Lincoln Center? The answer is yes: the play is as strong as it is tender. Ron Rifkin's characterization of the intransigent publisher at odds with his grown children has deepened in complexity, if that is conceivable. This is most evident in his scenes with Maria Tucci, as a psychiatric social worker, in Act II. Miss Tucci also has gained in strength and clarity, and she and Mr. Rifkin play together with such instinct and grace that the act, which almost seemed tacked on last spring, is now organic to the whole. Sarah Jessica Parker, Patrick Breen, and Jon Tenney remain with the company, to its benefit.

—EDITH OLIVER



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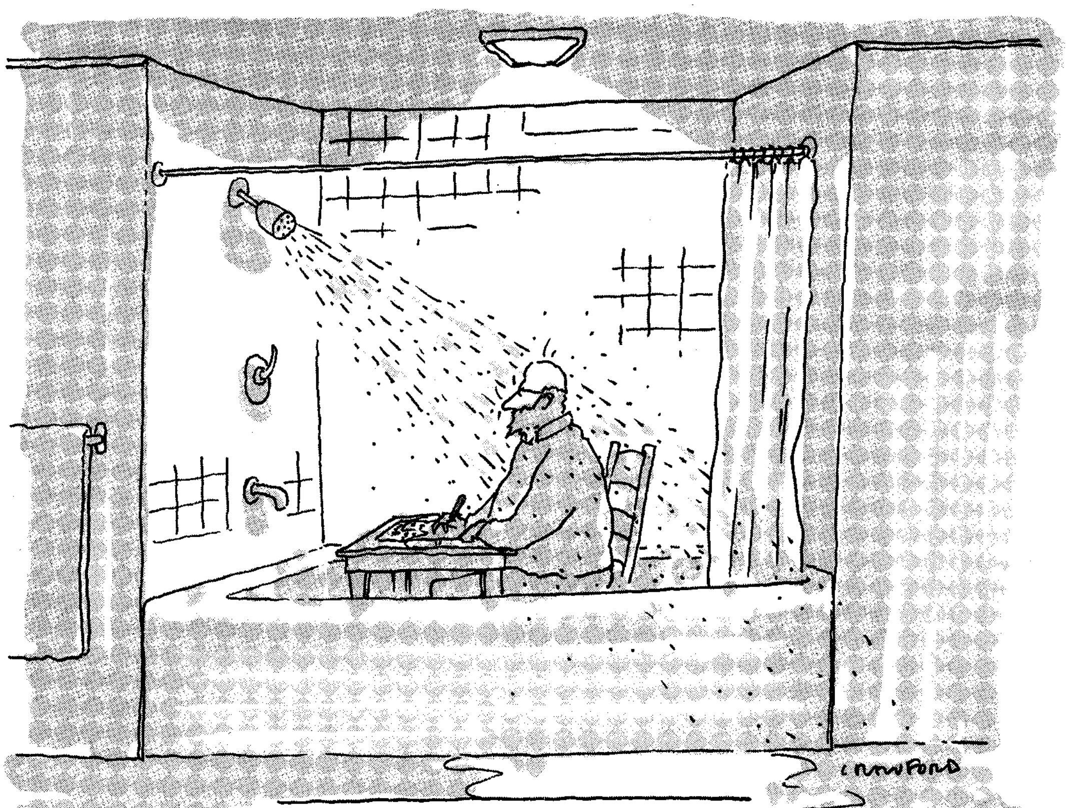
THE CURRENT CINEMA

My, My

"THIS IS MY LIFE," the first film directed by the novelist and screenwriter Nora Ephron, is a modest, uninsistent family comedy about a single mom from Queens who becomes a famous standup comic and, in the process, strains her relationship with her two young daughters. It's a determinedly small picture, and its tone is even; it's consistently good-humored without ever being really funny. The scenes float by on a lulling current of amiability and mild perkiness, and nothing surprising or incongruous bobs up; the surface remains placid, unbroken. Ephron's low-pressure style could have a calming effect on audiences worn out by the trade-show aggressiveness of recent Hollywood movies, which bear down on you like loud, sweaty salesmen wearing crudely lettered identification badges: "Hi! My name is 'JFK' "; "Hi! My name is 'The Hand That Rocks the Cradle.' " Watching "This Is My Life" is like slipping away from the din of the lapel-grabbers and the backslappers and finding yourself off in a corner somewhere, engaged in a pleasant chat with someone polite, soft-spoken, tastefully dressed. At the time, the encounter seems tonic, but soon afterward you discover that only the faintest traces of it have stuck in your memory. "Hi! My name is ——." Was anything filled in there at all?

The wispy, genial not-badness of "This Is My Life" is a little puzzling, because both the material and the cast that Ephron has selected are strong enough to support a much sturdier and more satisfying piece of entertainment. The screenplay, by the director and her sister Delia Ephron, is based on a good 1988 novel (called "This Is Your Life") by Meg Wolitzer, which tells the story of a comedian named Dottie Engels through the confused responses of her kids, Erica and Opal. Wolitzer's Dottie is a brassy, ebullient performer who goes on talk shows and reels off corny one-liners about how fat she is. Sample joke: "I do have a weight problem; I just can't *wait* for dinner." Most of the book's action takes place between the mid-seventies and the early eighties, and over that span Dottie's popularity dwindles from massive to nonexistent: we see her first as a beloved, ubiquitous TV star, and finally as a baffled has-been, hawking a line of large-women's clothing on late-night commercials. The novel provides, in a deceptively casual manner, a sly and acute social history of the seventies. Dottie—who seems "huge and luminous" to Opal when she sees her mother on the tube—is the wide screen on which Wolitzer projects changes in styles of comedy and in women's ideas of themselves. Between "Saturday Night Live" and the women's movement, Dottie's fat-gal shtick seems increasingly irrelevant and retrograde. By the eighties, she's a dinosaur; her daughters, moving in and out of her gigantic shadow, track her lumbering progress toward extinction and try, at the same time, to find their own ways of staying alive.

The movie's Dottie is played by the wonderful, raspy-voiced Julie Kavner, whose acting style is a rare combination of pinpoint comic timing and unforced ordinary-person warmth. She's the most *believable* comic actress around, and she's ideally suited to the role of a woman whose onstage persona is only a slight exaggeration of her at-home self. Samantha Mathis, who gave a remarkably vivid and original performance in the 1990 teen drama "Pump Up the Volume," plays Erica, a moody high-school intellectual in wire-rimmed glasses and a long brown overcoat. Mathis's work is less striking here, but she does a solid job; she's someone to keep an eye on. As Opal (who's about ten), Gaby Hoffmann is lively and skillful enough to hold her own onscreen with the more experienced actors. Dan Aykroyd and Carrie Fisher, as Dottie's agents, turn up every now and then to add a little sketch-comedy zing to the picture's otherwise deliberate rhythms.



WHERE EARL GETS HIS IDEAS

Despite everything "This Is My Life" has going for it, though the movie feels tentative and aimless. The Ephrons' adaptation relocates the story to the present, and it reduces Dottie physically, emotionally, and metaphorically. The snippets we get of Dottie's routines don't suggest a very distinctive approach to humor: no fat jokes, just companionable, almost funny riffs on domestic problems and household products—standard comedy-club stuff. (And the fact that she's a woman doing standup 's, of course, no longer enough to set her apart.) On the home front, the girls' emotional difficulties seem to have been stripped of their unique character, too, diminished to a bland universality: mostly, Erica and Opal complain about feeling abandoned, like any kids whose mother has to spend a lot of time away. The dramatic conflicts are couched in banal juggling-family-and-career terms; the peculiar nature of Dottie's career has a strictly decorative, atmospheric function here. The Ephrons have compressed and streamlined the material so drastically that there's almost nothing left of it. They stick to incidents from the first third of the novel (which is short), and end the picture with the heroine's career still on the rise and her relationship with her daughters back to normal. The story emerges from the filmmakers' rapid-weight-loss clinic dazed, unused to its new lightness.

"This Is My Life" is compact but essentially shapeless, and the impression it leaves is a blurry one. Ephron doesn't go for big vulgar laughs or big vulgar emotions. Most of the time, it's hard to tell exactly what she is going for: the discreet, temperate tone doesn't betray any sense of urgency or purpose. She works well with the actors, and the movie noodles along fairly gracefully, but after a while the lack of drive becomes frustrating. In a technical sense, this is a very assured movie for a beginning director; nothing in it is awkward or embarrassing (except the soundtrack, on which Carly Simon bursts hideously into song at frequent intervals). What's dismaying is that these negative virtues seem to represent he limit of the movie's aspirations. And its well-manneredness is oddly ut of keeping with its subject matter. Success in standup comedy reuires determination, a thick skin, and n irrepressible will to make your udience shake with laughter. "This

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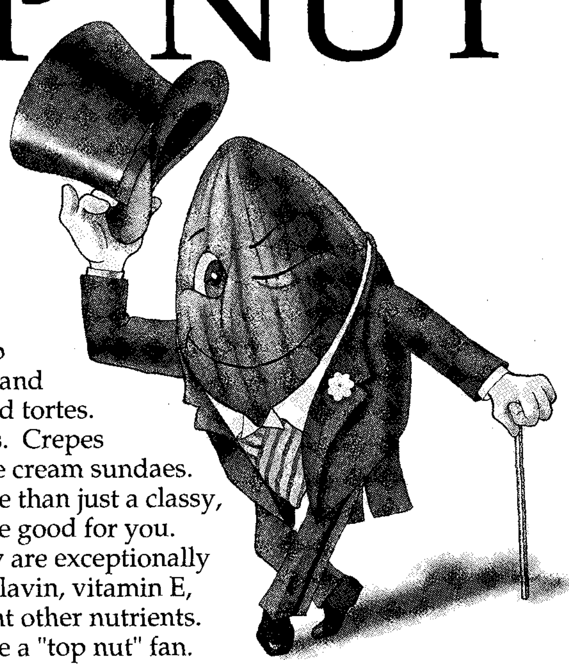

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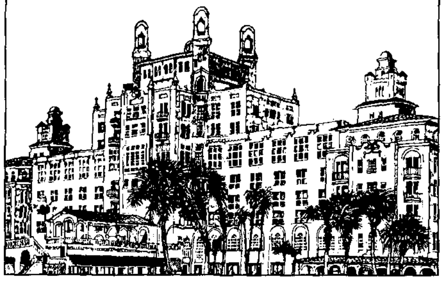

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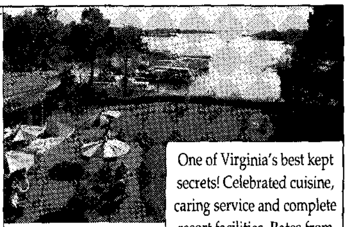

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Is My Life" doesn't have the steel or the shamelessness that good comedians need; its goal is to be smooth and likable and just amusing enough to keep the hecklers from getting started. Ephron's narrative is all buildup and no payoff—a shaggy-dog story, not a killer routine. The movie itself has a weight problem: it makes us wait and wait and then sends us home without dinner.

COMEDY is a tricky business, and there are lots of ways to go wrong. Nora Ephron's style in "This Is My Life" is too light and inconsequential for her material; in "Hear My Song," Peter Chelsom, who is also a first-time director, takes a whimsical conceit and sells it so hard that it loses most of its fragile charm. The hero of the movie, Micky O'Neill (played by Adrian Dunbar, who co-wrote the screenplay with Chelsom), is a young Irishman who manages a London music hall called Heartlys. The place is owned by an Irish family, and most of its patrons are Irish, too. Micky operates on boyish enthusiasm and a highly developed line of blarney, but he doesn't deliver the entertainment goods: he uses up his credibility by roping people into Heartlys to watch performers like Franc Cinatra, who dooby-doos and snaps his fingers for a packed house of quietly fuming suckers. On the verge of losing his job, Micky books a singer who claims to be Josef Locke, a legendary Irish tenor whose voice, it is said, makes women weep. Locke hasn't been heard from in thirty years, since he fled England to escape tax-evasion charges. He would be arrested if he returned to the country, so Micky bills him as Mr. X, and makes up posters that pose the question "Is it or isn't it?" In fact, it isn't. When the impersonation is exposed, everyone's furious with Micky; the only way he can redeem himself, he figures, is to go to Ireland and bring back the real Jo Locke.

On his home soil, the hero finds himself in a realm of ancient eccentricity and unearthly light, and the movie finds itself in Bill Forsyth territory. Chelsom tries to evoke the enchanted comic tone of "Local Hero," but he doesn't manage it; before long, you start to think of him as Bil Phorsyth. Small notions that should be tossed off casually are instead shoved directly into the audience's face, and held there. And Dunbar seems to punctuate every gag with a roguish smile, often shooting one of these twinklers, unconscionably, over his shoulder; the movie keeps looking back at us to make sure we're still with it, still responding to its relentless quirkiness. This sort of thing is annoying, but "Hear My Song" is so brazenly, childishly eager to please that it's impossible to stay angry for long. On its own terms, the story is well constructed; the movie wraps everything up in a grand, silly climax. The filmmakers take their fey, sentimental humor right to the limit: you can't say that they don't have the courage of their elfinness.

Ned Beatty plays Jo Locke (the real one), and when he's on the screen "Hear My Song" is nearly as transporting as it's intended to be. The role requires him to project an air of mysterious, self-sufficient authority—the deep confidence of a man who *knows* that his voice makes women weep. Beatty, who is rotund and powerful-looking, not only conveys that self-assurance but makes it funny, too. He creates a memorable portrait of someone who has nothing to prove, to himself or to anyone else (least of all to a twit like Micky). Locke's predominant expression is one of mild deadpan irritability; Beatty lets us know, though, that he's holding something in. And when Locke begins to sing, the joy in Beatty's face tells us precisely what that something is. This is large-spirited comic acting: a pure specimen of Celtic soulfulness, the magical substance that everyone else in "Hear My Song" has been trying to produce synthetically. Chelsom and Dunbar trip over themselves in the attempt to conjure up fairies and the "little people," but it's the big guy who's holding all the secrets.

—TERRENCE RAFFERTY

•

Q. My mom always used to say ". . . as slow as molasses in January." You mentioned the Great Boston Molasses Flood o Jan. 15, 1919, where a huge tank burst to le loose a tide of molasses that pushed ove buildings and killed people. How fast di that molasses flow?

A. About 35 mph. In hard times, th divorce count goes down, the bankruptc count up. Young attorneys used to be told t specialize in both. To beat boom-and-bust —*"Trivia," by L. M. Boyd, in the Lawrenc (Mass.) Eagle-Tribune.*

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LETTER FROM WASHINGTON

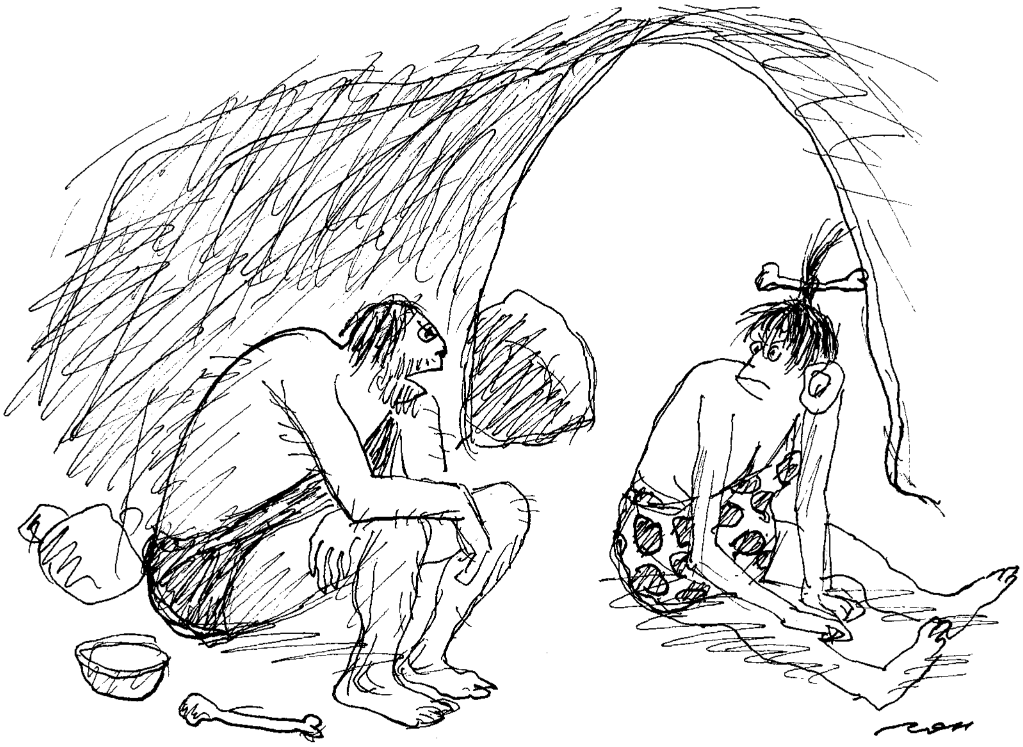
FEBRUARY 27

THIS election ought to put to an end a priori conclusions that a Presidential contest is going to be boring. This one has defied all predictions—as Presidential contests often do—and as of now has created anxiety and uncertainty in both parties. It could come down to which party fields the more vulnerable candidate. And while there is usually a tendency to overinterpret election results, finding more meaning in them than is there and taking too little account of the specifics of the situation, it is possible to conclude that New Hampshire last week—and South Dakota this week—voted for change. New Hampshirites, in giving the President's challenger, Patrick Buchanan, an embarrassingly large vote, and in picking Paul Tsongas and Bill Clinton, in that order, as their preferred Democrats, chose the most substantive candidates, all of whom stood for change. The other Democrats talked change, but in a less coherent and thought-through way. Bob Kerrey began to find his voice toward the end of the New Hampshire campaign, but, largely because the press had decided he couldn't win, few were listening. (The daily tracking polls, showing the candidates' relative standing each day, were a kind of primary in themselves—setting out that the real Democratic field consisted of Clinton and Tsongas.) The New Hampshire contest gets great and even disproportionate attention, but Kerrey's victory in South Dakota on Tuesday gave him a fresh chance to be taken seriously, and changed the Democratic picture somewhat.

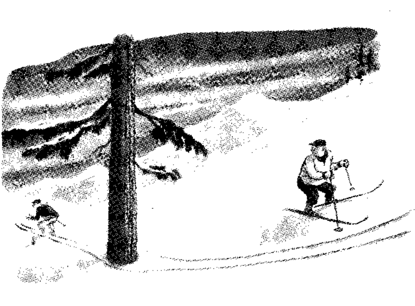
It may be that the Democrats have arrived at their post-liberal phase; the only candidate who is talking the old liberalism, Tom Harkin, is going nowhere (not just because of his philosophy). There are streaks of liberalism in what Tsongas and Clinton are saying—both, especially Tsongas, are social liberals, and both envision a large role for the federal government—but neither is talking about big new spending programs. Kerrey talks about cuts in domestic spending. The heritage of the reckless nineteen-eighties is a new fiscal realism (which a four-trillion-dollar debt makes inescapable), coupled with acceptance of the fact that, for some wrong reasons as well as some right ones, big government spending on social programs (S. & L.s are another matter) has gone out of style. The Democrats are also in a post-"movement" phase: no longer are candidacies predicated upon being the embodiment of, say, the peace movement, or the women's movement; nor is the Party divided among movements. The hard economic times also dictated the agenda of this year's nominating contests. On the Republican side, the New Hampshire primary exposed the fissure that runs deep within the Republican Party, between moderate-conservatives, as represented by George Bush (true moderates are virtually extinct), and the Party's right wing—a fissure that Bush straddles with difficulty.

There were, of course, factors that were unique to the New Hampshire contest. New Hampshire is more economically hard pressed than most other states and, except for Massachusetts, has fallen the furthest in the last four years. Both Buchanan and Tsongas spent far more time in that demanding state than their opponents, and Tsongas's coming from just across the border helped him. (Both were better candidates than their rivals—with the exception of Clinton, a gifted campaigner.) And, after New Hampshire, the nomination contest becomes a very different sort of animal. The candidates suddenly face a large number of contests that occur rapid-fire—twenty-five primaries and caucuses within three weeks—forcing them to make hard decisions about allocation of resources and of themselves, and rendering irrelevant the close-in "retail" campaigning that takes place in New Hampshire.

The size of Buchanan's vote in New Hampshire made Bush's once certain reëlection seem more problematic than ever. Buchanan got thirty-seven per cent of the vote to the President's fifty-three per cent. That "Uncommitted" got thirty-one per cent of the Republican vote in South Dakota (Buchanan wasn't on the ballot) wasn't at all a good sign. No one thinks Bush won't be the nominee, or sees Buchanan, a commentator, as a potential President, but Buchanan will be able to bleed Bush and distract him for some time, and weaken his base for November. Robert Teeter, the Bush campaign chairman, while not pretending that recent events have been marvellous developments for Bush, says that "what happens in the primaries and what happens in the general election



"You didn't like living in a tree. Now you don't like living in a cave!"



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are unrelated." He says, "It's a huge mistake to say that what's going on now portends for the fall." He points out that in 1972 Richard Nixon lost thirty-two per cent of the Republican vote to opponents in New Hampshire, and in November won sixty per cent of the vote and carried forty-nine states. The Bush people fear that Buchanan will stay in the race until California, which holds its primary on June 2nd, and where Republicans are already engaged in a civil war—and which Bush carried very narrowly against Michael Dukakis four years ago. But Bush should have wrapped up the necessary number of delegates by then, leaving a question as to Buchanan's rationale. It gets down to what Buchanan is really after, and on this, Bush campaign officials profess bafflement.

Bush's campaigning in New Hampshire revealed his basic emptiness. As opposed to Buchanan, he had nothing to say. He ended up pleading for support and bringing in Arnold Schwarzenegger to take on Buchanan for him ("*Hasta la vista*, baby"), but none of this was of much use, and, in fact, bringing in Schwarzenegger in lieu of addressing the voters' concerns may have backfired. (Engaging in his occasional self-pity, Bush told an "Ask George Bush" forum, on the Sunday before the voting, "I understand that there are a lot of people out there a lot more charismatic than I am." He went on, "But a lot of them don't have to make the tough decisions, either. Heck, if that were the case Phil Donahue might be President of the United States.") Bush has never established the passionate following that, say, Ronald Reagan did. Buchanan, the protest candidate who didn't have to offer a serious program, was able to capitalize on Bush's relative neglect of domestic policy (a criticism also voiced by the Democrats), and to stir New Hampshirites' anger at Bush for breaking his pledge to not raise taxes.

No one can say that Bush and his people hadn't been warned. The signs of trouble were all around, and some of the people working for Bush in New Hampshire sent warnings to the White House and to the campaign team (the two are virtually indistinguishable). But state campaign officials are often written off as hysterics. Bush's trips to the state did him little good, and his events over the last weekend before the voting were noticeably flat. He was defensive and a bit whiny. He complained that Buchanan's ads were "outright lies." Though he declared that he understood the economic distress of the people of New Hampshire, he didn't seem to. He came off as the blue blood trying to act as though he understood—"I care." Bush doesn't seem to get it; he seems unusually, and perhaps even dangerously, out of touch with his own country. Air Force One and all the other Presidential flummery were of no use, and when the President traipsed through New Hampshire shopping malls he seemed isolated amid an unenthused crowd. The plain fact is that, for a man who has spent most of his adult life in politics, Bush isn't a very good politician. He lacks feel, and naturalness. His awkwardness is sometimes embarrassing.

Meanwhile, Buchanan ran a close-to-the-ground, relentless campaign, setting aside some of his kookier, or even frightening, views and concentrating on Bush's vulnerability on taxes and the economy. His television ads reinforced his message. (Bush's were blah.) Buchanan, who has prospered mightily as a commentator and travels among the powerful, ran a credible campaign as the middle class's man, his pugilistic style and professional ability to express indignation helping him to come across as a man of the people—he referred to the President as "King George." Bush handed Buchanan—and the Democrats—an issue when, earlier this month, he set aside the middle-class tax cut he had proposed in the State of the Union address, saying that other tax measures, especially the capital gains tax cut, should be passed by Congress first. The President's advisers say that it was always intended to be this way, and people had simply missed the nuances in the State of the Union speech. They sure did—with the help of Bush, who prefaced his proposal to raise each family's personal exemption by five hundred dollars per child (people without dependent children were to get no break) by saying, "There's one thing we can do right away." But Bush had never much believed in the efficacy of a middle-class tax cut as a booster to the economy (in this, he has the company of most economists), and the Administration was having a hard time finding a politically palatable way to pay for such a cut. Bush's political situation wasn't much helped by a comment that a Bush political adviser made to the Washington *Post*, that the tax-cut proposal "was a proposal for New Hampshire." Bush was caught in his own cynicism.

Buchanan's strong showing in New Hampshire came as a shock to the White House and to campaign officials. They had been playing the "expectations game," by saying that Buchanan would do well by getting thirty-five per cent of the vote. (In the expectations game, people raise the bar for their opponents and lower it for themselves.) The early exit polls had Buchanan getting over forty per cent of the vote (Bush was said for a while to have thought he had lost), and the early numbers set the psychology of the day. The Bush people are right when they say that Buchanan spent more time in New Hampshire (forty-four days to Bush's four) than he would be able to in other states, and that he had other advantages there (including the full-throated support of the conservative Manchester *Union Leader*). But these explanations miss the point. So does the conclusion, arrived at by several of Bush's campaign aides, that Bush needed to attack Buchanan more. (His sallies in New Hampshire were oblique.) In appearances following the New Hampshire vote, Bush raised the subjects of Operation Desert Storm (Buchanan had vociferously opposed the Gulf War) and Buchanan's once proposing that Social Security be made voluntary. There is plenty to attack Buchanan on, but Buchanan isn't the issue. Bush is fortunate that he doesn't have a more plausible opponent.

The real problem for Bush is that his Presidency doesn't stand for anything. People are beginning to catch on to its hollowness. Bush's economic program, which he is now campaigning on, and using as a club over the Democrats' heads—saying, as he did n the State of the Union speech, that hey must pass it by March 20th, or else—is a limited, near-term approach o problems whose seriousness and depth he doesn't address. The deadline s a phony issue, and even Republicans ejected the President's original program, because it raised some taxes. It eceived only one vote in the House of Representatives yesterday. Bush will robably veto whatever the Democrats

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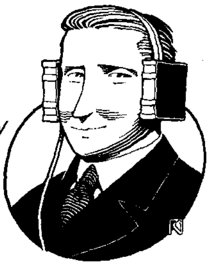

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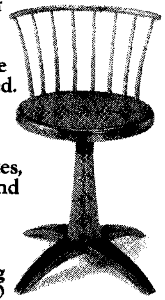

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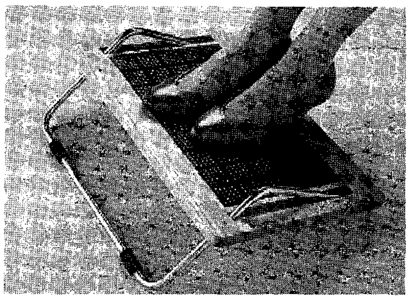

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pass, because it would raise taxes on upper-income people to pay for a middle-class tax cut, and there will be no tax bill. A number of Democrats and Republicans think this is just as well, because they think the income-tax-cut proposals are irrelevant to the economy. Bush will of course blame the Democrats. Bush has proposals for education reform and, of late, health-care reform, and he says he will offer welfare reform, but his proposals don't go to the heart of the matter, and he doesn't make much of them, so they more or less evanesce.

Now Bush is campaigning harder than he did before the New Hampshire voting, and his campaign is trying to drive Buchanan out of the race as soon as possible. His aides say that the picture will look very different after the contests between now and March 10th (Super Tuesday). There have been deep splits within the Bush campaign and the Bush White House on how to respond to Buchanan's challenge. The campaign's first impulse was to send Bush on the road like a political Willy Loman and have him attack Buchanan frontally. Others believed that this strategy would demean the President, build up Buchanan, and weaken Bush's conservative support in November. They would prefer that Bush act more Presidential and treat Buchanan as a nuisance rather than as a major threat, and make the Democratic Congress, not Buchanan, his opponent. The group includes Vice-President Quayle, who has ideas about his own future and has no interest in alienating the conservatives who form his base. Quayle was sent forth last weekend to warn conservatives against making it easier for the Democrats to defeat Bush. Quayle also argued that Buchanan, with his isolationist and protectionist views, isn't a true conservative. Quayle and Buchanan are obviously competing for future leadership of the conservative movement, and Quayle has to be very careful not to alienate Buchanan's followers.

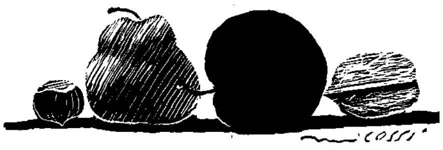
One Presidential adviser says that, given the split over the best tactics for confronting Buchanan, both approaches would probably be followed. (Bush is now on the road for virtually two full weeks.) It must be remembered that Bush, in a political clinch, fights hard. And he will, as he said, do whatever he has to do to be reëlected. At the end of last week, the President threw to the wolves John Frohnmayer, the head of the controversial National Endowment for the Arts and a leading conservative target (Buchanan had attacked him the day before), and put on hold a proposed tax change that had evangelical Christian churches up in arms, and made some other moves to protect his right flank. It almost seems as though Buchanan is running the government. (Now, in the South, to show how outraged he is, Buchanan is running an ad using an actual scene from an N.E.A.-backed film, showing dancing gay black men wearing leather harnesses with metal studs.) The current Bush campaign strategy is to have surrogates, and ads, attack Buchanan, leaving the President "above" the fray. Meanwhile, the President attacks Congress. This week, the Bush campaign ran ads in Georgia that had retired Marine Corps commandant P. X. Kelley attacking Buchanan for his opposition to the Gulf War. Inevitably, Buchanan in the South is attacking Bush's signing the civil-rights bill, which Buchanan calls a "quota bill." A number of Bush advisers didn't want him to sign the bill, so that he would have that argument for himself. Bush's Presidential agenda this year is to get reëlected. He is offering the country no idea what he would do after that.

IT was difficult to tell whether numerous Democratic officeholders, concerned about maintaining their majorities in Congress and their hold on state offices, were more discombobulated by Tsongas's victory in New Hampshire or Clinton's coming in a strong enough second to stay viable. They don't see either man as electable. They see Tsongas as a regional candidate (this could change soon), weighted down by his Massachusetts Greekness, his nebbish style—though his reverse charisma worked very well for him in New Hampshire—and vulnerable to questions about his health. (Tsongas says that he has been free of lymphoma since he underwent a bone-marrow transplant in 1986.) They believe that Bush would make mincemeat of Tsongas in a general election. They find his lecturing the Party on where it has gone wrong irritating, and think that if he sticks to some of his positions he wil drive off large parts of the Democratic constituency. Though Clinton got bac on his feet in New Hampshire, Part pros still see him as highly vulnerabl come the election. But in reality Party pros have long had little to say about whom the Party should nominate. It's safe to say that if we had a parliamentary system, or one in which the Party heavyweights chose the candidate (they played a big role in the selection of John F. Kennedy), neither Clinton nor Tsongas would be chosen.

Clinton's campaign hit its low point in the wake of the revelation of his letter, written when he was twenty-three, to the head of the University of Arkansas R.O.T.C. But actually, according to some measurements, his slippage in the polls had begun before that. For a long time, Clinton had led the field in New Hampshire. In the wake of the draft controversy, Clinton's own internal polls showed him behind Tsongas by twenty points. Clinton and his people made much of the fact that he came in second, and had begun to close the gap with Tsongas, but the truth is that in early February, even after the Gennifer Flowers episode, his poll ratings were in the high thirties. In fact, Clinton and his camp played the expectations game—and the impressions game—brilliantly. Before the voting, Clinton began to say that "if anyone had told me I'd come in third in New Hampshire, I'd have been amazed." On the night of the primary, he was the first Democratic candidate to address his troops, and his upbeat speech gave television viewers the impression that he had won. Clinton exultantly, and shrewdly, declared himself The Comeback Kid. His trailing Tsongas by eight points was portrayed—successfully—as a triumph. Clinton's resilience, and his spirited campaigning, in the closing days of the primary won the admiration of much of the press, but it followed a period in which Clinton had been off his stride, campaigning minimally, and blaming others for his troubles, rather than conveying his own message. (Clinton has a petulant side, as was demonstrated today in his strong reaction to an erroneous report that Jesse Jackson was supporting Tom Harkin—"It's a dirty, double-crossing, backstabbing thing to do"—which accidentally went out over an open microphone.) And even his own message remained a little muddy. When he's on, Clinton is a very good campaigner—more of a natural than anyone else in the race.

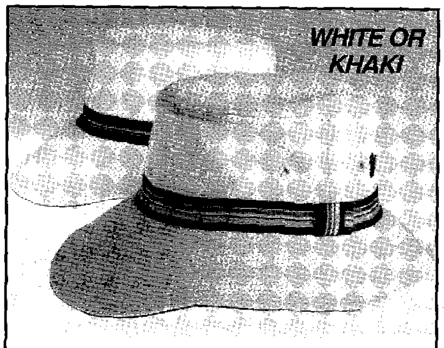
The draft letter was notable for two hings: it confirmed that Clinton had for a while evaded the draft—as did many college-educated members of his generation—though he had been denying this; it showed that even at the age of twenty-three he was concerned about his "political viability." This was the reason given in the letter for his decision to submit to the draft; until shortly before the letter was made public he had said that he had done so because some of his high-school classmates had been killed in Vietnam, "and I just didn't feel right about it." The issue raised by the letter wasn't so much his actions at the time—the letter did show how precocious he was, and how concerned he was even then with not displeasing any faction—but his truthfulness later on. So Clinton now had his second "character" issue. (If Clinton is nominated, Republicans can be expected to feature that part of the letter in which Clinton said that "no [democratic] government . . . should have the power to make its citizens fight and kill and die in a war they may oppose.") But after a few days the press and New Hampshirites considered it bad form to keep asking Clinton about the draft, just as the questions raised by the Gennifer Flowers story became unfashionable.

The Clinton people now maintain that their candidate has been "inoculated" on the issues of sex and the draft—that he has answered all the relevant questions and the subjects are closed—but a number of experienced politicians and other observers think otherwise. No one thinks for a moment that if Clinton is the nominee the Republicans will refrain from reminding the voters about these subjects. The Republican nominee doesn't have to say a word. Further, many people are convinced that the subject of Clinton's extramarital sex life will return, in another form—and that the public won't dismiss it as easily as the Clinton campaign argues it will. The New Hampshire results—and exit polls in South Dakota on Tuesday—suggest that the public hasn't altogether dismissed the questions about Clinton. The Democrats' nightmare—more vivid with each new piece of evidence of Bush's vulnerability—is that the Party will nominate Clinton and that Clinton's negatives will tip the scales in the closely fought big states.



AT the moment, Tsongas is trying to establish that he isn't just a regional candidate, and has put a lot of time and effort into Maryland, which, along with Georgia and Colorado, holds its primaries on March 3rd. (At the moment, Tsongas is leading in Colorado.) His coming in only a shade (less than a percentage point) ahead of Jerry Brown on Sunday in Maine, which usually follows the example of New Hampshire, didn't do him a lot of good. (Clinton, who made a real effort in Maine, came in fourth, after "Uncommitted.") Tsongas came in a poor fourth in South Dakota. Some of his advisers think that the novelty is wearing off and that he needs to say more about what he would do as President, and make his message more positive—something beyond telling people they can't have a tax cut and that gasoline taxes should be increased. In New Hampshire, Tsongas did best among the educated and the affluent—and there may be a demographic ceiling to his appeal. (According to the *Wall Street Journal*, Tsongas prevailed over Clinton by forty-one per cent to twenty per cent among those who own a foreign car.) In Maryland, he is going after the same kind of voters, who are plentiful in the suburbs adjacent to Washington. And there is a question of how well he would wear over time. His dry wit and his self-deprecating charm are accompanied by a certain righteousness—an I'm-right-and-everybody-else-is-wrong approach to public issues—that has long irritated political colleagues as well as opponents.

Tsongas first broke with liberal Democratic orthodoxy in 1980, when he gave a much noted, and controversial, speech to the Americans for Democratic Action, once a powerful liberal group but by then a fading organization. He said that liberalism "is at a crossroads," and argued that the younger generation hadn't grown up with liberalism's experiences and assumptions, and that liberals had to focus more on the issues of productivity and energy. These ideas have ended up in Tsongas's Presidential campaign: he favors tax breaks to business to generate productivity, as well as an increase in the gasoline tax, and nuclear power as a last resort. Tsongas supports a cut in the capital gains tax—



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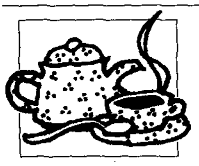

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Clinton supports a more limited one—and argues that a tax cut for the middle class would get us not one step nearer in our competition with Japan. He holds to the liberal position on most social issues. Recently, on "Meet the Press," he said that he would apply a means test to Medicare and wouldn't rule out applying a means test to Social Security recipients. Tsongas's work in the "private sector" is now getting more scrutiny—he was more attorney and lobbyist than corporate official (though he serves on some corporate boards). Tsongas is a determined man, and an immodest one, but even he seemed taken aback by his early success—saying on the eve of the voting in New Hampshire, "This is so bizarre. This is so bizarre. I am such an unlikely candidate." On occasion, he becomes spiritual, talking about how his disease caused him to run for the Presidency. This kind of thing could make people uncomfortable.

Bob Kerrey's squeaking into third place in New Hampshire gave him enough room to try to be the third finalist in the race, and his finishing a resounding first in South Dakota on Tuesday solidified his position. Party officials took note of the fact that according to one exit poll in New Hampshire, Clinton, Tsongas, and Kerrey all would have defeated Bush. This told them that, among other things, Kerrey's improved campaigning toward the end had done more good than the primary results indicated. The Clinton people didn't want a Kerrey victory in South Dakota, since they see a two-man race between Clinton and Tsongas as the surest way to wrap up the nomination with relative speed, and they see Kerrey as harder to beat. (Clinton has taken on Tsongas as urging more "trickle-down" economics.) The Clinton people understood that if Kerrey won in South Dakota he might be seen as a viable alternative to the choice between Clinton and Tsongas—an ominous refuge for voters and unhappy elected officials. So Clinton threw more resources than he had planned into the South Dakota race, and belatedly decided to join in the debate there Saturday night. (Clinton came in third in South Dakota. Exit polls indicated that Kerrey benefitted substantially from voters' concerns about Clinton's character and Tsongas's health.) If Kerrey were to win one of the major contests this coming Tuesday—Georgia, Colorado, or Maryland—or to even exceed expectations, he could raise enough money to accumulate delegates on Super Tuesday and perhaps finish out the campaign with a fight with Clinton in the North. (Tsongas, of course, would have to fade.)

The Kerrey campaign had long eyed Georgia as a place to embarrass Clinton, who has the endorsement of much of the political establishment. Georgia is one place where Kerrey's war record could work substantially in his favor, and yesterday, in Atlanta, Kerrey went right at Clinton, saying that if he were the nominee the Republicans would open him up "like a soft peanut," over his draft record. Kerrey went on to question not Clinton's patriotism but his "evasion of responsibility" in his explanations of why he wasn't drafted, and his blaming Republicans for his various troubles—and blaming the federal government, or a study, for the fact that Arkansas ranks last in environmental protection. Kerrey pointed out that Clinton, in his campaign, was stressing individual responsibility. Though in saying that the Republicans would land on Clinton's war record in the fall Kerrey was stating an obvious truth, Clinton and his campaign cried foul. They maintain that Kerrey shouldn't use the issue of Vietnam, because he had said in New Hampshire that he wouldn't. Actually, Kerrey had gone back and forth on the matter.

Kerrey began to run a better campaign in the closing week in New Hampshire and did well in the last debate there, and we may never know how much better he would—or would not—have been if he had started the race earlier and practiced more. In the closing days, Kerrey began to talk about his plan for national health insurance as a first step toward change, thus moving it away from its hitherto and insufficiently rewarding, place as the centerpiece of his campaign. Though the cost and availability of health care is an important issue to people—whether they aren't covered or fear that they will lose their jobs and their coverage—the over-all economy was of more importance to the people of New Hampshire, and Kerrey was slow to work out a coherent economic message. The health-care issue was more helpful to him in South Dakota, which has a more elderly population. Kerrey's war wound was supposed to have been a protection against the usual Republican attacks on the Democrats' patriotism, not a credential for the nomination, and it didn't seem to impress New Hampshirites. It may be becoming more relevant now. In the course of his New Hampshire campaign, Kerrey bounced from subject to subject—and only at the end pulled together what he wanted to say, and said it in a way that connected with his audience. Until then, Kerrey, an unconventional man, seemed a stranger to the disciplines of running for President, and appeared to have an almost mystical faith that if he just offered himself to the voters they would want him. (A lot of other people had believed the same thing about him.) He also has a detachment and sense of irony that may be very healthy but causes him to smile at the wrong time and look detached. His sense of fun is one of his more attractive features, but it can undermine the solemnity Presidential candidates are supposed to affect. Now he works into his basic speech a combination of the foreign-policy speech he gave earlier this month, and some of his thoughts about what he means when he says we need "fundamental change." He says that the end of the Cold War offers us new opportunities, and challenges, at home as well as abroad. On the night of the primary in South Dakota, he said, "The dream that I have is to take the power of this Presidency . . . to rebuild our economic strength, to put Americans back to work with the purpose of raising our incomes and our standard of living." He said this would require hard work, saving, and training, and investing "to make sure that Americans have the skills that they need to do the new jobs of tomorrow." It was, at last, a coherent, and even inspirational, speech. Now we have to see if he can keep it up. (In an interview on CNN on the night of the South Dakota voting, he said, "I've hit my stride.")

In New Hampshire, Tom Harkin, who had won the caucuses in his home state of Iowa overwhelmingly (against no real opposition), made himself increasingly unpopular with the press by attacks, some of them wide of the mark, on his competitors. The voters weren't much taken with him, either. His coming in a distant second to Kerrey in South Dakota—a contest that had been widely billed as a showdown between the two farm-state senators—did him no good, and his campaign is barely alive.

Jerry Brown's winning eight per cent of the New Hampshire vote—several points over where he had been in the polls leading up to the voting—is generally attributed to his seizing the environmental issue, and using Tsongas's tolerance of nuclear power against him. Brown remains a fringe candidate, but he can run a low-cost guerrilla campaign for some time. He used the nuclear-power issue effectively against Tsongas in Maine, where his anti-establishment message appealed to the kinds of people who would attend caucuses (he drew a lot of new voters), and he appealed to the old Jesse Jackson coalition. Jackson came in second in Maine in 1988, and Brown has said he wants Jackson as his running mate. Brown also spent a full five days in Maine—far more than his competitors did.

Toward the end in New Hampshire, and in South Dakota, Kerrey argued that he was the "electable" candidate—as opposed to Clinton, for whose candidacy "electability" had been a major rationale—and he is now repeating that claim. Now Clinton, who is as yet without a victory, is counting on his home base in the South to propel his candidacy forward. (There was a time when his campaign stated that he wouldn't be a regional candidate, and hoped to win New Hampshire.) He is awfully embattled for a "front-runner" so early in the game, but he is far better financed, and has fielded more of an organization, than his competitors—and still has a chance to lock up the nomination fairly quickly. The Democrats deliberately designed a "front-loaded" system that would produce a nominee early, and now they are stuck with it.

AND a lot of Democrats are very unhappy—even beside themselves. At dinner last week, an agitated Democratic senator said, "This is a nightmare, an absolute nightmare." Kerrey's subsequent victory in South Dakota made them feel only marginally better, because they have doubts about his staying power. A Democratic senator said today, "The feeling is one of despair." It is true that Democratic members of Congress are often unconcerned with what happens at—or to—the top of the ticket. But this year, with strong anti-incumbency winds whip-

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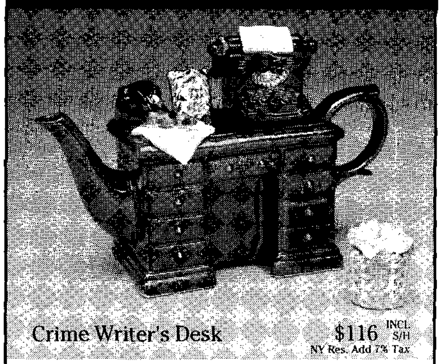

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ping out there and, because of reapportionment, with many members having to run in new and unfamiliar districts, and with a lingering anger over the Dukakis debacle in 1988, and even with fatigue from trying to get anything done in a divided government, Democratic officeholders are intensely concerned about the top of the ticket. Some Party leaders will be watching the results in the South closely: though Clinton at this moment has no strong opponent in the South, they will be reading the exit polls for data on how the draft and womanizing issues may have affected Southern voters. The South, after all, was key to Clinton's "electability." A lot more people here are familiar with the various states' filing procedures for entry into their contests than were a couple of months ago. Just before New Hampshire, people around House Majority Leader Dick Gephardt and Senator Lloyd Bentsen were brushing up, and each camp was eying the other. The consensus was that only one new candidate should get in.

Gephardt, importuned by many of his colleagues, and receptive to their pleas, was known to be ready to get into the race right after New Hampshire if two things happened: Clinton did very poorly, and Bush did very poorly. No one wanted to get in for the sheer sake of winning the nomination. Bush did poorly enough, but Clinton didn't. (Gephardt was also ready to go if Clinton's campaign had imploded after the draft issue was added to his problems.) Bentsen, who enjoyed his role as the star of the 1988 campaign, has never completely closed the door on being this year's nominee. But, at seventy-one, and with a regard for his dignity, he doesn't want to campaign for it. In recent weeks, Bentsen considered offering himself as a one-term President who would use the freedom from seeking reëlection to do hard things. Then he decided that by giving up the possibility of a second term one was giving up power to do hard things. Gephardt's candidacy is now said by his friends to be on ice and likely to remain there. (If Gephardt ran, he would probably have to give up his position as majority leader—and an eventual opportunity to be Speaker—and wouldn't be able to run for reëlection to his House seat.) Bentsen is said to remain open to a draft but to consider one unlikely. Some of Bentsen's worried Senate colleagues are trying to stir up a Bentsen draft that appears to originate from outside Washington.

Mario Cuomo lost a number of his potential supporters by playing it cute one too many times. His speech (elegant and eloquent though it was) at the John F. Kennedy School of Government—in the New Hampshire media market—just six days before the New Hampshire primary, and his coy suggestions that the write-in campaign for him there was fine by him didn't go over well, in the neighborhood or elsewhere. The write-in got a mere four per cent of the vote. Three days later, Cuomo asked that the write-in effort shut down.

As long as Clinton is in the race, and seemingly doing well, other potential candidates have felt that they have to stay out. (Kerrey's potential viability is now another cause for hesitation.) Otherwise, new candidates might lack a rationale for entering the race and might look—of all things—ambitious. Furthermore, a study of the rules and schedule, the fact that a late entrant would have to be an instantly effective candidate and might still end up behind Clinton in the delegate count (some states whose filing deadlines had passed would be voting, leaving the would-be Party rescuer on the sidelines), and the lack of any national clamor for the new candidate made the enterprise look more difficult than it had sounded at first. It was expected that the press would be tough on a late entrant—asking where he'd been when the going seemed rougher. And an "insider" rationale might not be terribly compelling. (The Bush people—insiders all—relish the idea of going after a congressionally sponsored candidate.) But this doesn't rule out someone's getting into the race between now and the Democratic Convention, perhaps after the primaries are finished—or, for the first time in a long time, dramatic developments at the Convention. Some Party leaders want Kerrey to stay in the race, as insurance. A new disclosure affecting Clinton's prospects could, of course, change everything quickly.

So now Democrats await with anxiety the playing out of their nominating contest. It's enough to make even the Republicans smile.

—Elizabeth Drew

BOOKS

Phoning It In

LAST year, the novelist Nicholson Baker published a book called "U and I," about his obsession with John Updike, in which he proposed, among a thousand other things, that the truest measure of what books really mean to us is what we remember of what we read. Certain images or phrases take up residence in our thoughts and, however distorted or unwittingly rewritten by us, resurface now and then to aid us or amuse us or return us to our earlier selves. Sometimes all that remains of a whole world we once devoured greedily is one apparently inconsequential detail; as Baker puts it, "what once was *Portrait of a Lady* is now for me only a plaid lap-blanket bobbing on the waves; *Anna Karenina* survives as a picnic basket containing a single jar of honey."

When I cast around in my own mind for plaid lap blankets or other significant debris, I'm embarrassed at what I find. Much of what I've got to show for my reading is smut, or near-smut, that's been fermenting for fifteen years or so. I can still see what's-his-name in "Jaws" sending a woman to the bathroom in a restaurant to remove her underwear and then fondling her in the car; or the guy in "Something Happened" trying to make it with his wife in the bottom of a rowboat. (She never liked to do it outside.) And I can't forget an ill-fated couple in a dog-eared copy of an awful book called something like "The Rats," which was passed around camp one summer—the lovers were rolling over and over each other on a grassy knoll when the pack of man-eating rats attacked and finished them off. It's not that those scenes were especially well written, or that I bring nothing to bear on what I read but my dirty mind; it's just that the old maxim that sex and reading have a lot in common is probably true. Both rely on our ability to make up fantasies and believe in them—or at least to suspend disbelief long enough o get something we need.

When I'm actually reading the "good parts," though, I feel enthralled only when the writing is as good as the sex, and all through Nicholson Baker's most recent book, "Vox" (Random House; $15), it is. In "Vox," a man and a woman who live thousands of miles apart meet on one of those expensive party lines and, liking the sound of each other, punch their touch-toned way into an electronic "back room" where they can carry on alone. They proceed to talk each other off, in a hundred-and-sixty-five-page conversation—one long good part.

Baker's first two novels were sexy, too, but not because of their content. Each is a miniature that can be read in under three hours, and each passes a tiny, discriminating needle over the fine grooves in the mind of a young, hyper-smart, and affable narrator. In "The Mezzanine" (1988), he rides the escalator in the building where he works, thinking about why one of his shoelaces broke before the other (a fate that befell him that morning), and about the strange and liberating onset of adulthood, which he can pinpoint to the moment when he realized that he could apply antiperspirant without taking his shirt off. The whole *book* takes place during the escalator trip up to the mezzanine, and it's full of Nabokovian footnotes: about the linguistic usage of the singular "oop" among men trying to avoid colliding in corporate-bathroom doorways, or the canonical shift the narrator underwent when he stopped borrowing his father's neckwear and started picking out his own.

What's sexy about all this is that Baker's obsessive thoroughness—his need to illuminate even the most shadowy, speedily turned corners of our thoughts—causes him to operate in a kind of teasing super slo-mo that is intrinsically seductive. Here's the way the narrator romances the comparison between himself and a snack he bought on his lunch hour:

> I felt somewhat like an exploding popcorn myself: a dried bicuspid of American grain dropped into a lucid gold liquid pressed from less fortunate brother kernels, subjected to heat, and suddenly allowed to flourish outward in an instantaneous detonation of weightless reversal; an asteroid of Styrofoam, much larger but seemingly of less mass than before, composed of exfoliations that in bursting beyond their outer carapace were nonetheless guided into paisleys and baobabs and related Fibonaccia by its disappearing, back-arching brown petals. . . .

And so on, through seven more commas. The same kind of distension

Gahan Wilson

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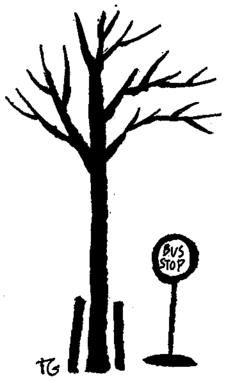
holds in "Room Temperature" (1990), in which the narrator, this time a baby-rocking, cogitating new father, blows a small puff of air toward a mobile that hangs across the room. (That, in sum, is the plot of the novel.) It takes three whole chapters for his exhalation to displace the intervening air molecules and make the mobile begin to shiver.

Baker luxuriates in the perilous mental and physical blockages that constitute most of domestic life: the obstacles and preparatory stabs and musings—the meta-scruples, as he calls them—that stall all of us along the way. He can render the mind's most incidental caress with a sublime attentiveness: the dad in "Room Temperature" says of his baby daughter's nose, "The Bug's nostril had the innocent perfection of a Cheerio (and Cheerios were on my mind, since lately we had begun to offer them to her), a tiny dry clean salty ring, so small, with the odd but functional smallness of the tires on passenger planes, or of the smooth rim around the pistil of the brass pump head that you fitted over a tire's stem valve." Baker's mind, ticking away behind these intricate mini-cadenzas, is simply more interesting than most writers', his vocabulary more entertaining. His magnifying-glass approach to character, his high-precision attention to detail, his way of endlessly subverting what he wants to say with his long, loopy complex sentences—they keep shimmering outward like the rings on a pond, covering more and more watery area even as they fade into it—make him an inherently sexy stylist.



So it's no surprise that Baker would want to try his hand at something explicitly sexual. "Vox" is just such an effort: heady drafts of sex packaged for the literary audience as real writing—or, perhaps more accurately, heady drafts of writing foisted on the unsuspecting best-seller buyer as real smut. The back cover of the advance galleys promises "the most sexually provocative novel of our time." Maybe the crucial words there, however, are not "sexually provocative" but "our time"—the era of safe sex, of (at least in terms of lip service paid) the New Monogamy, of jollies vicariously gleaned from televised public scandals. The sex in "Vox," between Abby and Jim—both of whom are single, professional, and middle-class—couldn't be safer. She lives in "an eastern city," he in "a western city." They do it over the phone—no body fluids exchanged. They need not touch or even see each other; they will probably never meet.

But to overemphasize this is to set the book in a social and political context that obscures the idealized, abstract pleasure Baker takes in the concept of a purely language-driven erotic mind game. The slow-love prose in "Vox" isn't just textual foreplay—it's the vehicle for real foreplay. Abby and Jim tell each other what they're wearing, what turns them on (and what doesn't), what they're doing (he, toying with the soil in his potted palm; she, lying atop her chenille bedspread sipping a Diet Coke), and a lot of other stuff that isn't strictly dirty but leaves itself open to creative interpretation. Jim, who is wearing underwear, a terry-cloth bathrobe, and flip-flops with blue soles and red "holder-onners," explains to Abby, "They're good in the morning for waking up. On weekends I put them on and I walk down to the corner and buy the paper, and the feeling of that thong right in the crotch of your toe—man, it pulls you together, it starts your day." Abby is a connoisseur of the fadeouts at the end of pop songs: "I used to turn them up very loud—with the headphones on—and listen very closely, trying to catch that precise moment when the person in the recording studio had begun to turn my volume dial down. . . . Sometimes I'd turn the volume dial up at just the speed I thought he—I mean the ghostly hand of the record producer—was turning it down, so that the sound stayed on an even plane. I'd get in this sort of trance. . . ." In other words, she'd prolong the climax as long as possible, and Baker's delayed-cadence technique suits her perfectly.

In fact, Abby and Jim seem less like real people than like salt-and-pepper his-'n'-hers versions of Baker—well not Baker, exactly, but that authoria guy we imagine we know. Everything they say is imbued with his refine weirdness, and it *must* be he who keep tickling us with those evocative coin ages: Jim comes up with "strumming as a better word for male masturbation, and Abby counters with the hummingbirdish, appropriately female-sounding "dithering." One of Jim's secret words for breasts is "frans" (it works: "that babe had a great pair of frans"); Abby privately refers to a part of her anatomy as her "candy corn." Baker freshens the tattered clichés of sex talk the same way he has made the mundane language of corporate and domestic life snap, crackle, and pop—by inventing new words, or toying masterfully with the ones we already have.

The author is everywhere, and yet he has eliminated the need for a kibitzing narrative presence by setting the book as a dialogue; "he asked" or "she said" is about the extent of the padding. We're never told that Jim, say, fiddled with the remote control as he was speaking, or that Abby undid the top button of her blouse. We learn about what Jim and Abby are doing only from what they say to each other—as when he tells her he has just made a minor adjustment because his underwear was starting to "bug" him. There's a one-to-one correspondence between the information available for our titillation and theirs; we're listening in on the conversation, and it goes far beyond pop-song fadeouts and toe crotches. The two relate in detail their sexual encounters with other people. Abby and a patent lawyer once poured olive oil on each other and masturbated in synch with the aid of a carefully positioned shower massage; Jim and a woman friend from his office rented an X-rated video together and, using the pause and rewind buttons to great effect, had a side-by-side-on-the-couch climax under a fringed acrylic blanket—without touching each other, that is. Masturbation, not penetration, is the preferred means; Abby is prone to yeast infections, and, as Jim puts it, "when I come inside it feels mystical but muffled."

Obviously, Baker appreciates the finer side of sex: he knows it's silly—ridiculous, even. He's not drowning in passion so much as playing—riffing on the things in our everyday lives that function as soft porn, from those "Deliques Intimates" catalogues that keep coming in Jim's mail ("this persistent gush of half-dressed women . . . on such expensive paper, with the bee-stung lips," he explains) to the obscure idbit that's not meant to turn us on but does anyway. Of Tinker Bell, in the Disney "Peter Pan," Jim says:

> [She] zips around in a sprightly way, with lots of zings of the xylophone . . . and you think right, typical fairy image, ho hum. . . . But then this thing happens. She pauses in midair and she looks down at herself, and she's got quite small breasts . . . but *quite* large little hips, and *large* little thighs, and she's wearing this tiny little outfit that's torn or jaggedly cut and barely covers her, and she looks down at herself, a lovely little pouty face, and she puts her hands on her hips as if to measure them, and then shakes her head sadly—too wide, too wide. *Oh* that got me hot!

Abby, in turn, reports that when her patent lawyer took her to the circus she had a striptease fantasy while watching a Venezuelan ball-spinning act. She *became* the black-spangled woman, spinning faster and faster until she was at the center of a blur of things flying outward, and "somehow my whole outfit was torn in pieces from my body, and flung out into the audience, so that when the drumming stopped and I froze suddenly . . . all these pieces of my clothing were still floating aloft in all directions."

Jim is turned on by things he sees—Tinker Bell on the tube, or a series of women passing by in their cars (the sight of those shoulder belts pulled tight between their frans drives him to distraction)—while Abby writes mini-narratives for herself. "Even in the buildup to one orgasm, it's a kind of bake-off," she tells Jim—a competition in which the most compelling story wins. In her mind she screens the narrative possibilities: "I'm a geometry teacher measuring boys' penis length? Yes or no. No. Am I a nurse at a fertility clinic and my job is to strip for clients who have difficulty . . . ? No. I'm in a dressing room and some native-Hawaiian security guard is watching me try on blue jeans over the video monitor? Ooh, maybe yes." Then she rockets off into the realm of write-as-you-go. When Jim asks Abby whether she'd prefer an X-rated tape or a book of Victorian pornography as fodder for dithering, you know she's going to choose the book. And you begin to see how Baker is relishing his role as male provider—provider of stories, that is. In "U and I" he grumbles that most great novelists have been homosexuals or women—that, alas, he and Updike may not be wired for greatness. But if women and stories belong together the way men and centerfolds do, then writing stories is a kind of male-

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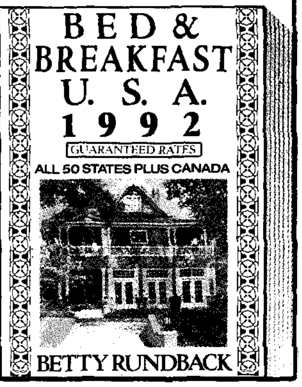

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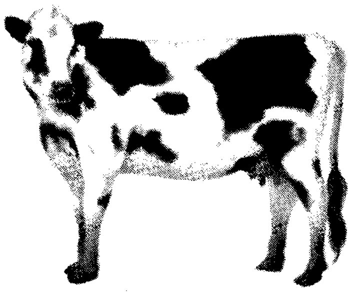

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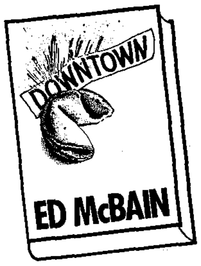

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performance fantasy come true. Jim spells it out for us when he tells Abby, "I've heard for so long about those studies that say women like stories and men like pictures I've started to feel lately that stories *represent* women and are therefore sexually charged for me."

But despite the sexually charged nature of the stories and pictures Abby and Jim swap, there's something strangely tame about what they're doing. They're consenting, unattached adults; they both get out exactly what they put in. In fact, the perfect symmetry of their satisfaction—the even-Steven exchange of confidences ventured and received—has a kind of levelling effect. We don't really feel intimacy between them—nothing that comes close, anyway, to the sweetly imbalanced intimacy between the dad who touches his tongue inquisitively to the Cheerio-like nostril and the Bug who shoves his face away with her tiny fist, or to the embarrassing, confessional intimacy of Baker comparing his psoriasis to Updike's in "U and I." In truth, "U and I" is a far dirtier book than "Vox"—or, at least, more shocking. When Baker describes his affliction, he's truly naked before his reader: "It covered my entire buttock region, as Day-Glo-colored as a baboon's," he says. And his contention that writers are the "imaginary friends" of our adult lives—that, for *his* intents and purposes, he really is friends with John Updike, though they have met only briefly—is more bizarre, more expressive of vulnerability and waywardness and pure desire than anything in "Vox," and so honest that it's nearly a reproach: we've all felt such unearned intimacy with a favorite writer, but who would say so? It made me love him.

In fact, it's Baker and I—Baker and the reader—who get shamelessly intimate in the pages of "Vox." It's as though another dimly heard long-distance conversation were crackling along in some supertextual realm, parallel with that of Abby and Jim—a conversation in which the author is urging the reader, most vigorously if the reader happens to be a woman, to go ahead and please herself. As Jim explains to Abby, visiting the romance section of a secondhand bookstore is supremely arousing to him because of all the female orgasms that can be "inferred" from the used paperbacks on the shelves.

But orgasms—especially the self-induced variety—aren't particularly hard to come by. What is rare is the laughter Baker provokes us to at his own expense: he's so willing, so generous with his neuroses and his outré metaphors! I suspect that most readers would trade a fleeting moment of autoerotic bliss for the delicious laughter sparked by Jim's paean to Tinker Bell, or by the half-gulped "Welp" that escapes him when Abby asks him to open his robe and describe his manhood for her. The sexiest thing about Baker may be, finally, that he's a funny guy.

And yet, despite the several forms of pleasure Baker proffers in "Vox," there's something sad about the book—something that seeps in from the chilly, transactional realm of the one-night stand. In fact, there's an ultrasonic mournfulness—it's not heard so much as felt—that resonates in all of Baker's writing, as though his extreme virtuosity were costing him something. (Nobody calls him a humor writer, though his books are funnier than most of what's marketed as humor.) Maybe what's particularly sad about "Vox" is that somebody *is* paying for the call. Early in the conversation, Abby asks Jim to let her call him back, since every thirty seconds is ninety-five cents out of his pocket. But he wisely refuses, afraid that this once-in-a-lifetime connection can't be redialled. And though he gives her his number before they hang up, the reader is hard-pressed to believe that she'll ever use it. This is the one place where Baker can't avoid contemporary gender politics. Yes, the earth moved for her, too—but even after their mutually satisfying, non-phallocentric pleasure, she doesn't give him *her* number, and he, with chivalric deference, doesn't request it. Baker and I will probably be together as long as he's writing and I'm reading, but Jim and Abby are eternally apart. If their call took as long as it took me to read about it, by the way, the bill came to two hundred and forty-seven dollars.

—Deborah Garrison

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AMERICA, AMERICA

[*Adv. in Yankee magazine*]

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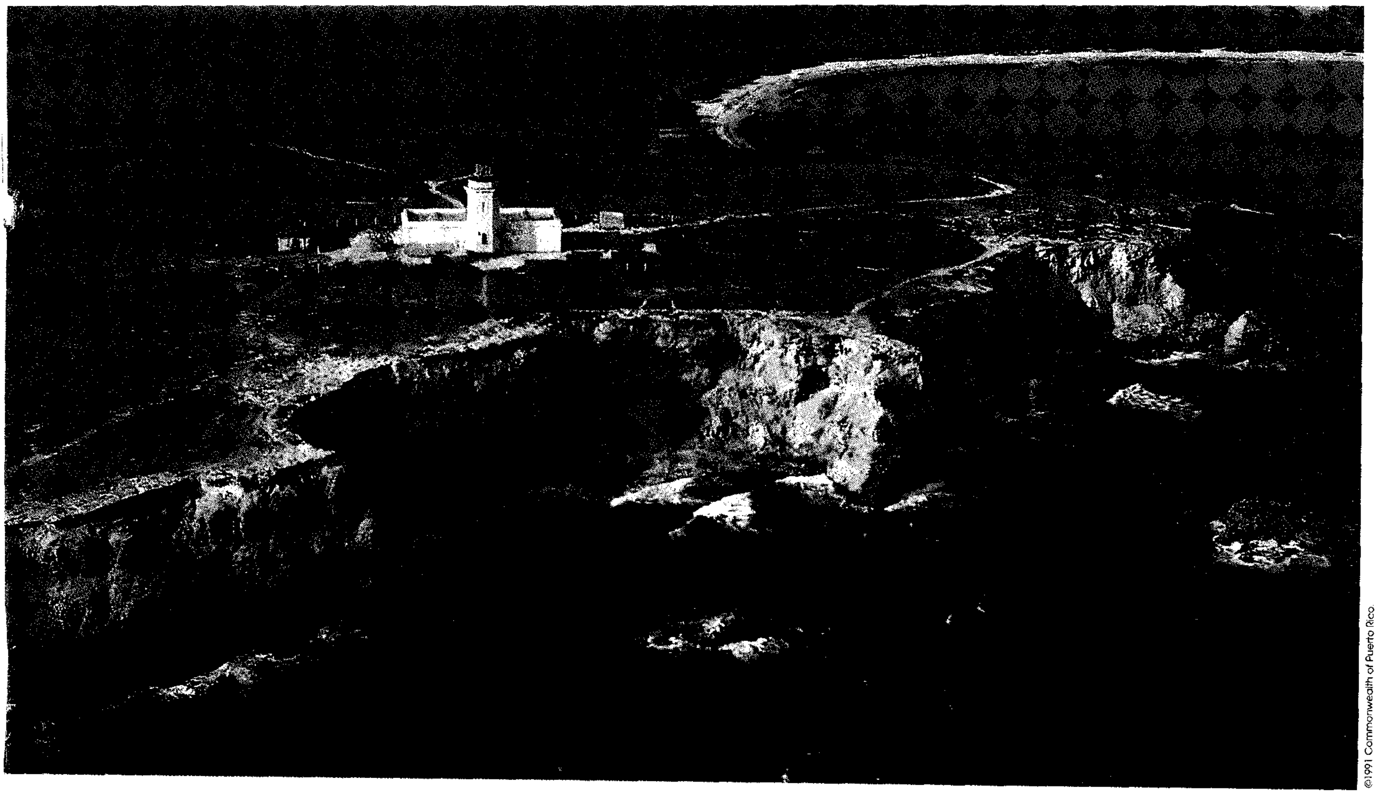

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NO.

Aye, the wind echoing down the highland cliffs, the whack of a golf ball on the velvet green, the clop of a horse, the wave of a farmer, the slap of the fish on the fisherman's line. Is that the high isle you thought this was? It is. Only this one is also tropical, ringed with clearwater beaches and swaying palms, and it's all close enough for a weekend away. So come on in, lads and lassies, the water's fine.

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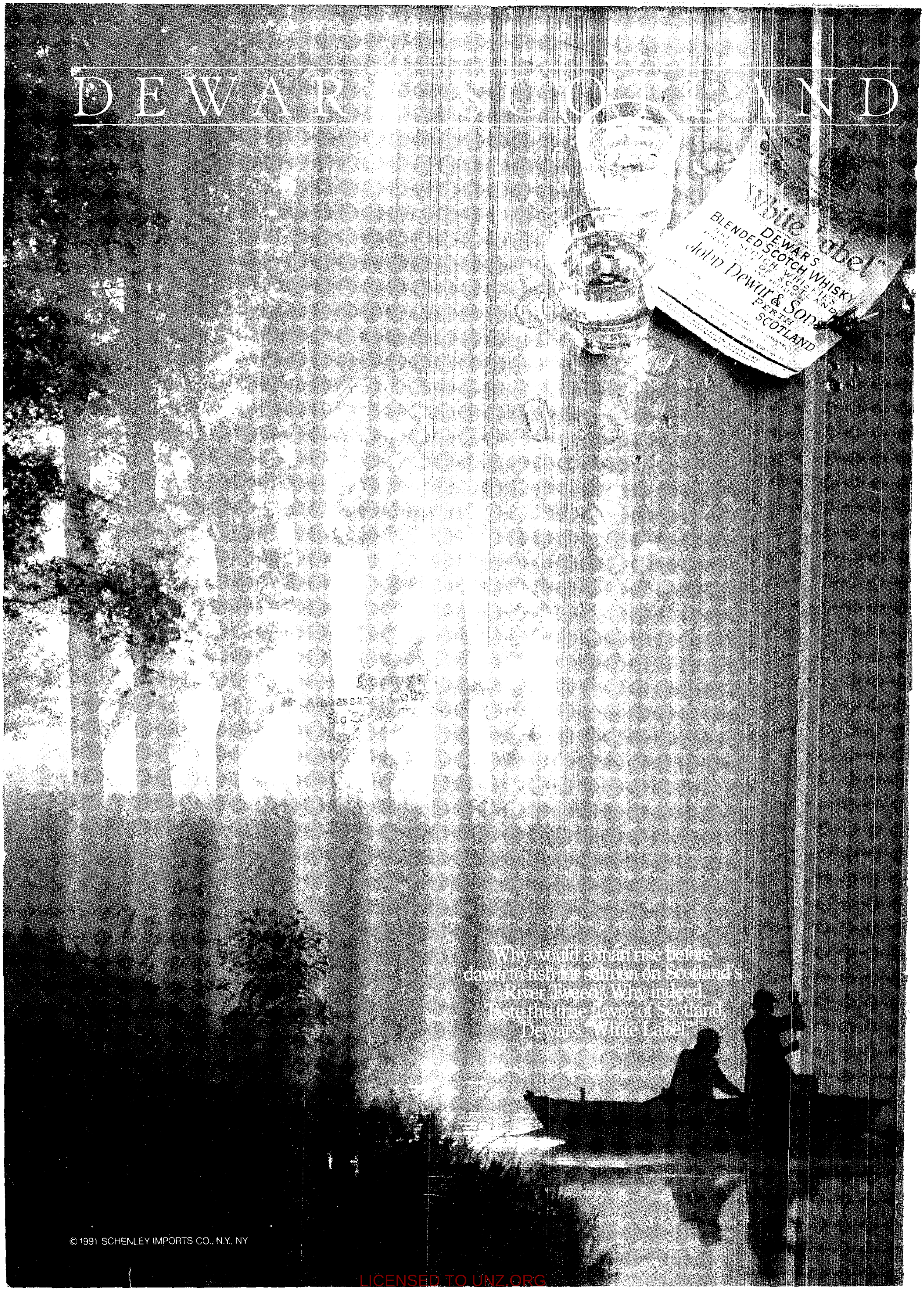
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